



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

WEDNESDAY — 7 SEP 2022



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Events, Opportunities

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| HEADLINE | 09/07 At Head Start, toddlers' masks remain on |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/07/us/head-start-masks-toddlers.html |
| GIST | <p>PERTH AMBOY, N.J. — The Biden administration has taken credit for a relative return to normalcy in schools over the last year of the coronavirus pandemic. But in one of the few education programs the federal government directly oversees — Head Start preschools and child care centers for low-income families — mandatory masking rules are still on the books for teachers and children as young as 2-years-old.</p> <p>That requirement is out of line with current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, released last month, which recommend universal masking only if there is a high community</p> |

transmission rate. The [vast majority](#) of schools and day care centers have made masks optional, even in the most virus-cautious regions on the country.

The [strict Head Start guidelines](#) were established last November during the surge in Delta variant infections, and they remain in place in half the states, including those throughout the Northeast and on the West Coast. In addition to universal masking, they require that Head Start staff members be vaccinated.

A group of conservative states, including Texas and Florida, sued to prevent the rules from taking effect, and federal courts [imposed an injunction on the guidelines in those states](#). Now, the masking and vaccine requirements are a point of contention for local Head Start centers, complicating both enrollment and hiring, program directors said. Many parents don't want their young children to be masked, worried that masking could hinder socialization and language development. And their older children are now able to attend schools without any face coverings.

"Head Start programs have been short-circuited," said Tommy Sheridan, deputy director of the National Head Start Association, a trade group. "This mandate on masking and vaccines has hurt a lot of programs. It is more of a crisis that is now feeling like a looming catastrophe."

In a written statement, the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees Head Start, acknowledged that the current guidelines contradict those of the C.D.C. but said that centers are not being checked for compliance on masking. Updating the official rules is "a lengthy process," the statement said, which would take into consideration the C.D.C.'s evolving recommendations, the recent availability of vaccinations for children as young as 6 months and over 2,700 public comments.

The struggle to mask young children became clear at a family orientation meeting this month at a Head Start center run by Acelero Learning in Perth Amboy, N.J.

Silas, a 3-year-old with big, round eyes and a buzz cut, has spent the pandemic at home, and he was pumped for the new adventure of pre-K. His surgical mask was no match for his enthusiasm — even though his grandmother, Olga Jimenez, reached over repeatedly to tug it over his mouth and nose.

When he spied the play kitchen, the battle was all but lost. Silas bounded over, mask dangling. Soon, a plastic chicken wing was in his mouth, and he was passing it back and forth to three other girls and boys.

Ms. Jimenez sighed and said that she would prefer Silas to go to school without a mask.

Some parents have academic concerns — even if masking can be mastered. Melissa Ruiz's two children, Milani, 4, and Gabriel, 3, wore their face coverings like a second skin as they played with blocks and dolls.

Both were enrolled in the center last year and are accustomed to the routine, which their mother supports. But Ms. Ruiz said she wished Milani and Gabriel could see the full faces of their teachers during lessons.

Masks can make it more challenging for some children to develop early speech and reading skills, which are learned, in part, by observing mouths in movement, according to research.

And while masks, properly worn, do offer virus protection, young children tend not to be severely affected by the coronavirus, even when unvaccinated.

For many Head Start centers, the masking and vaccine rules make a difficult situation even more difficult.

A [May survey](#) of the National Head Start Association's members found that the average center had 30 percent of its staff positions unfilled. Last year, about 745,000 children and babies were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start, down from 970,000 before the pandemic, according to federal data [compiled](#) by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The causes of staff shortages and enrollment declines are complex. Many Head Start positions pay the minimum wage or just above, and workers can often earn more in retail or food services while being subjected to fewer virus restrictions.

Vaccinations may also be an issue. Eleven states have mandated vaccinations for teachers. But some states, [including New Jersey](#), have relaxed those rules — presenting Head Starts with more competition for staff members who are qualified in early education, program directors said.

When Head Start centers cannot hire enough teachers, they often close entire classrooms, leaving families on a waiting list. And some parents remain hesitant to send young children to school, especially if it means they will be masked, program directors said.

Even though the federal government has said it will not “monitor” the Head Start masking rule, centers across the country have struggled to interpret what that means in practice.

Program directors described a culture of compliance within Head Start that leaves them, they said, with little choice but to follow the guidelines strictly.

“We always choose to follow the most stringent” requirements on the books, said Amanda Worth-Colón, who works for Acelero Learning, overseeing several Head Start programs in New Jersey.

Ms. Worth-Colón said that parents often asked why their young children had to wear masks when local kindergarten students were allowed to be mask free. The contradictory government mandates have contributed to confusion and skepticism — not only about masking, but also about the efficacy of vaccines, she said, noting that only about 20 percent of her students have been vaccinated.

“The different information from us, versus the C.D.C., versus the public schools — all of that is contributing to mistrust,” she added.

During the pandemic, the United States was an outlier in ever calling for universal masking for toddlers. The World Health Organization has [advised](#) that masks are not generally appropriate for children under 5. In England, children below middle school age were [never universally required to mask](#).

Not all Head Start centers in the affected states have strictly enforced the federal guidance. Noreen Landis-Tyson, who directs Head Start programs in Colorado Springs, said that at this point in the pandemic, mandatory student masking would be a nonstarter with the families she serves.

“It can be libertarian,” she said of her region. “People want to make their own choices.”

Still, she adheres to the federal requirement on staff vaccination, a constant source of frustration, she said, as she competes with more relaxed, often higher-paying employers, like Target. Staffing shortages forced her to delay opening three classrooms this school year, and another two are indefinitely on hold while she searches for personnel.

Her goal, she said, is to serve as many children as possible after years of disruption to their short lives, and sometimes to their caregivers’ ability to work. Some Head Start children had not even been born when the pandemic began.

“The kids in our program,” she said, “are what we call Covid babies at this point.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Seattle schools crossing guard shortage |
| SOURCE | https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-facing-crossing-guard-shortage-start-school-year-approaches/772B4IBDZNEVLDWYSSN4AFHRKU/ |

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| GIST | <p>SEATTLE — Nearly four in 10 intersections identified as “too dangerous for kids to cross alone” near Seattle schools do not have a crossing guard, according to a new report released by the city’s School Traffic Safety Committee.</p> <p>The committee, which was created to ensure that there are working relationships between the different organizations involved in making sure students have safe routes to school, presented its annual report to the city council’s transportation and Seattle Public Utilities committee on Tuesday.</p> <p>When fully staffed, Seattle Public Schools employs 117 paid crossing guards at intersections near schools in the district, and all of them were furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The vacancy rate sits at 39%, with 46 locations not having a crossing guard assigned to them, according to the report.</p> <p>The committee believes that these vacancies can be filled if SPS removes an “unnecessary hurdle”: a \$55 background check fee.</p> <p>“SPS already recognizes that background check fees are a disproportionate burden for hourly applicants, and already waives them for most hourly staff, but not for crossing guards,” the report reads in part.</p> <p>Many applicants to these crossing guard positions are retirees on fixed incomes, and the committee reports that this fee can result in significant delays for these applicants as they often need to wait for their next month’s social security check to pay it.</p> <p>The position is also reportedly difficult to fill as paid crossing guards work only two nonconsecutive hours a day.</p> <p>The committee is also planning to make a push to increase the public’s awareness of the vacancies and reach out to members of parent-teacher organizations at schools in the district in hopes of finding more applicants.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Shelling resumes at Ukraine nuclear plant |
| SOURCE | https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/09/07/ukraine-russia-war-nuclear-power-plant-iaea/2531662548121/ |
| GIST | <p>Sept. 7 (UPI) -- Russian mortar fire exploded in areas near the vulnerable nuclear power plant in southeastern Ukraine on Wednesday, one day after United Nations inspectors issued its first assessment and called for a safe zone around the facility.</p> <p>A local official said that Russian shelling resumed close to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, where an inspection team from the International Atomic Energy Agency have been for days assessing its safety.</p> <p>In its first report, the IAEA team said on Tuesday that Ukrainian and Russian leaders should carve out a safety zone around the plant so that no gunfire, shells or rocket strikes compromise the integrity of the plant.</p> <p>Experts have been worried about the Russian-controlled plant for weeks due to the close proximity of the shelling. An accident or heavy damage to one of the reactors could trigger a core meltdown or a disaster similar to the one that rocked Ukraine's Chernobyl plant in 1986.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Russia: gaining from conflict in Ukraine |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/russias-putin-says-west-is-failing-future-is-asia-2022-09-07/ |

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia, Sept 7 (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia had gained, not lost, from the conflict in Ukraine because it was embarking on a new sovereign path that would restore its global clout.

Putin increasingly casts the conflict in Ukraine, which he calls a "special military operation", as a turning point in history when Russia finally threw off the humiliations which accompanied the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

In an attempt to underscore Russia's tilt towards Asia, Putin, speaking to the Eastern Economic Forum in the Russian Pacific city of Vladivostok, said that the West was failing while Asia was the future.

In his main speech, Putin hardly mentioned Ukraine beyond a reference to grain exports. But when asked by a moderator if anything had been lost from the conflict, Putin said Russia had gained and would emerge renewed.

"We have not lost anything and will not lose anything," said Putin, Russia's paramount leader since 1999. "Everything that is unnecessary, harmful and everything that prevents us from moving forward will be rejected."

"In terms of what we have gained, I can say that the main gain has been the strengthening of our sovereignty, and this is the inevitable result of what is happening now," Putin said. "This will ultimately strengthen our country from within."

He did, though, acknowledge that the conflict had unleashed "a certain polarization" in both the world and in Russia.

Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what it called a special operation to degrade its southern neighbour's military capabilities and root out people it called dangerous nationalists.

Ukrainian forces have mounted stiff resistance. Neither side has disclosed how many soldiers have been killed.

Putin's assessment of Russian gains did not take account of NATO's huge build-up of forces in eastern Europe and its planned admission of Sweden and Finland as members. Preventing NATO expansion was one of his stated objectives for intervening in Ukraine.

He also brushed aside the impact of sanctions that have starved Russian industry of key components like microchips, cut Russians off from international payment systems and led to the departure of thousands of Western companies.

The economy would contract by "around 2% or a little more" this year and the budget would be in surplus, he said.

Putin, who turns 70 in October, told the West in July he was just getting started in Ukraine and dared the United States - which enjoys economic and conventional military superiority over Russia - to try to defeat Moscow. It would, he said, fail.

WESTERN 'FEVER'

The confrontation with the West over Ukraine has prompted Russia to accelerate a pivot towards Asia and particularly China, once a junior partner of the Soviet Union and now the world's second largest economy.

For much of the past 300 years, Russia has looked to the West as the crucible of economic growth, technology and revolutionary ideas. In that period it has also twice been invaded from the West, by Napoleon and Hitler.

Putin, though, said that the West was failing because a futile and aggressive attempt to isolate Russia with sanctions was destroying the global economy just as Asia was rising to claim the future.

The United States and its allies imposed the most severe sanctions in modern history on Russia for its actions in Ukraine. Putin says the sanctions are akin to a declaration of economic war.

"I am speaking of the West's sanctions fever, with its brazen, aggressive attempt to impose models of behaviour on other countries, to deprive them of their sovereignty and subordinate them to their will," Putin said.

"In an attempt to resist the course of history, Western countries are undermining the key pillars of the world economic system built over centuries," he said, adding that confidence in the dollar, euro and sterling was falling.

Among the guests at the forum was China's top legislator Li Zhanshu, currently ranked No.3 in the Chinese Communist Party. Putin will meet China's Xi Jinping next week in Uzbekistan.

Putin said that China would pay Gazprom (GAZP.MM) for its gas in national currencies, based on a 50-50 split between the Russian rouble and Chinese yuan.

The West's attempt to economically isolate Russia - one of the world's biggest producers of natural resources - has propelled the global economy into uncharted waters with soaring prices for food and energy.

It has hurt Russia too.

Putin said Russia's economy was coping with what he termed the financial and technological aggression of the West, but acknowledged some difficulties in some industries and regions.

He warned of a looming global food crisis and said he would discuss amending a landmark grain deal with Ukraine to limit the countries that can receive cargo shipments.

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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Putin: Ukraine grain deal deception |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukrainian-counter-attack-underway-un-pushes-nuclear-plants-safety-2022-09-07/ |
| GIST | <p>KYIV, Sept 7 (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday he wanted to discuss reopening a U.N.-brokered deal that allows Ukraine to export its grain via the Black Sea after accusing Kyiv and the West of using it to deceive developing countries and Russia.</p> <p>Putin's criticism, which alleged that the deal was delivering grain, fertiliser and other foodstuffs to the European Union and Turkey at the expense of poor countries, is likely to raise fears that the pact could unravel if it cannot be successfully renegotiated.</p> <p>Ukraine, whose ports had been blockaded by Russia since it invaded in February, said the terms of the agreement were being strictly observed and there were no grounds to renegotiate it.</p> <p>The agreement, facilitated by the United Nations and Turkey in July, created a protected export corridor via the Black Sea for Ukrainian grain after Kyiv lost access to its main export route when Russia attacked Ukraine via land, air and sea.</p> <p>The agreement, designed to help ease global food prices by increasing supplies of grain and oilseeds, has been the only diplomatic breakthrough between Moscow and Kyiv in more than six months of war.</p> |

Moscow said at the time that one of the main reasons it signed the deal was because it wanted to help developing countries stave off food shortages.

But Putin said on Wednesday that Ukraine and the West were not honouring its terms and that most of the grain was going to the EU, not to poorer countries, something the Russian leader said would have to change if what he called an "unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe" was to be averted.

"I met with the leaders of the African Union, with the leaders of African countries, and promised them that we would do everything to ensure their interests and facilitate the export of Ukrainian grain," Putin told an economic forum in Russia's Far East region.

But if shipments to Turkey as an intermediary country were excluded he said that only two out of 87 shipments had fallen under the U.N. World Food Programme, representing just 60,000 tonnes or 3% of the total 2 million tonnes exported so far.

"We are honouring the agreements. (But) it turns out....that they (the West) have just royally screwed us over and not just us but the poorest countries whose interests were the pretext for doing all this."

There were roughly 70 ships stranded in Ukraine when Russia invaded in February, some of which had already been loaded with grain, with contracts already signed. Some of those contracted cargoes have been the first to move.

Putin spoke about possibly restricting grain and food exports to the EU and promised to discuss the matter with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who helped broker the original deal.

OTHER COMPLAINTS

A Ukrainian presidential adviser responded by saying that Russia had no grounds to review the landmark pact and that the terms of the wartime agreement were being strictly observed.

"I believe that such unexpected and groundless statements rather indicate an attempt to find new aggressive talking points to influence global public opinion and, above all, put pressure on the United Nations," said Mykhailo Podolyak, the adviser. [read more](#)

Ukraine hopes to export 60 million tonnes of grain in eight to nine months, presidential economic adviser Oleh Ustenko said in July, cautioning that those exports could take up to 24 months if ports do not function properly.

According to the United Nations, 88 ships have sailed or are due to sail from Ukraine under the deal so far, and of those two have been World Food Programme ships – one of which went to Djibouti, the other to Yemen.

Of those 88 ships the most grain – 368,407 tonnes – has gone or is due to go to Turkey. Around 757,697 tonnes in total is listed as going to European Union members though some shipments are also going to other countries including China, India, Iran, Egypt and Sudan.

Putin complained that another part of the deal meant to ease restrictions for Russian food exporters and shippers was not being implemented either.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov cast doubt on the deal too a day earlier, accusing Western states of failing to honour reciprocal pledges to help facilitate Moscow's shipments.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Russia sends more energy to Asia |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-china-asia-india-27d7b75a8f6c5404d89cd54cdb236d86 |

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| GIST | <p>BERLIN (AP) — Russia sent significantly more oil and coal to India and China over the summer compared with the start of the year, while European countries that long relied on Russian energy have cut back sharply in response to the war in Ukraine, said a report published Tuesday.</p> <p>The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said Russia received about 158 billion euros (\$158 billion) in revenue for the sale of oil, natural gas and coal from February to August, more than half of which — some 85 billion euros worth — was exported to the European Union.</p> <p>Within the EU, Germany was the biggest importer, buying 19 billion euros worth of fossil fuels from Russia during the six-month period.</p> <p>The single biggest importer worldwide, however, was China, which bought 35 billion euros worth of Russian energy, the Helsinki-based group said.</p> <p>While Russia’s revenue rose, overall export volumes dropped by 18% compared with when the country invaded Ukraine, the report said.</p> <p>The EU has cut its imports from Russia by 35% since the war began, with Russian coal now banned in the 27-nation bloc and a halt to oil sales due to take effect at the end of the year.</p> <p>Russia itself has sharply cut flows of natural gas to the EU, indicating this week that they would not resume unless Western sanctions are lifted.</p> <p>Germany’s economy minister, Robert Habeck, said Monday that his country doesn’t expect gas imports from Russia to resume anymore.</p> <p>Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock acknowledged Tuesday that past purchases of cheap Russian gas had come at the expense of Germany’s national security — an argument past governments in Berlin had firmly rejected.</p> <p>“Until recently, there were spurious technical reasons; now the rulers in the Kremlin are alluding to our sanctions as a whole, which supposedly stand in the way of further gas deliveries,” Baerbock said in a speech to German diplomats and business representatives in Berlin. “We must state this very clearly: We will not succumb to this blackmail.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, India and China imported significantly more coal and crude oil from Russia in July and August than in February and March, according to the report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.</p> <p>The group said fossil fuel exports contributed about 43 billion euros to Russia’s federal budget, compared with independent estimates that the war has so far cost the Russian state the equivalent of 100 billion euros.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 India, China clear needle-free Covid vax |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-china-0cfbcd23fa9ff0eb4e2217126a3475ae |
| GIST | <p>NEW DELHI (AP) — India and China have cleared a new approach in COVID-19 vaccination — two needle-free options, one a squirt in the nose and the other inhaled through the mouth.</p> <p>Regulators in India authorized Bharat Biotech’s nasal version on Tuesday as an option for people who haven’t yet been vaccinated.</p> <p>“This step will further strengthen our collective fight against the pandemic,” Indian health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Twitter.</p> |

It's not clear how well the nasal version works. Bharat didn't immediately release results of its studies or say how soon the new option will roll out.

CanSino Biologics announced Sunday that Chinese regulators have approved an inhaled version of the company's injected COVID-19 vaccine to be used as a booster dose. The company pointed to preliminary results of studies suggesting the inhaled version revved up immune protection after one puff. It's not clear if that translated to improved effectiveness, or how soon the inhaled booster will be available.

COVID-19 vaccines today are shots, and they've saved millions of lives and continue to offer strong protection against severe illness and death, even as more contagious variants of the coronavirus circulate.

But shot-free versions are being explored as a strategy to improve protection against infection, with particular interest in nasal vaccines designed to fend off the virus right where it enters the body. Nearly a dozen possible candidates are in various stages of testing globally, and CanSino's is one of two inhaled vaccine candidates being developed, according to the World Health Organization.

India's nasal vaccine was developed by scientists at Washington University in St. Louis and later licensed to Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech. The company conducted two trials, giving two doses of the vaccine to 3,100 previously unvaccinated volunteers and as a booster to around 875 volunteers who had received two shots of other COVID-19 vaccines.

Bharat also is seeking clearance for the nasal spray to be used as a booster for the two-thirds of people in India who've already been vaccinated.

Bharat's nasal spray uses a harmless chimpanzee cold virus to deliver a copy of the coronavirus spike protein to the lining of the nose, training the body to react if it encounters the real virus.

CanSino's inhaled booster uses a similar harmless human cold virus — it's the company's one-dose injected vaccine turned into an aerosolized form. The inhaled vaccine was largely tested as a booster for people who had received another Chinese company's COVID-19 shots.

Ashley St. John, who is an immunologist at the Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, said scientists are pursuing nasal and inhaled COVID-19 vaccine options because the immune system has specialized tools to protect different sites in our body in slightly different ways.

"The advantage with nasal vaccines is that it may get rid of the virus before it has a chance to establish itself in the lungs and replicate," said Dr. Vineeta Bal, an immunologist and professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education Research in Pune city.

The advantages that vaccines sprayed through the mouth have will depend on the size of individual droplets in the spray, Bal added. Large droplets would train defenses in the mouth and parts of the throat, while smaller droplets are expected to travel deeper and reach the lungs.

It also may be easier to administer a squirt in the nose than a shot, especially in low-income countries, said Dr. Michael Diamond of Washington University in St. Louis, who helped create the vaccine licensed to Bharat.

In October 2021, Russia's Health Ministry allowed early trials of a nasal form of Sputnik V among 500 volunteers, but the status of those trials and the availability of the vaccine remains unclear.

Vaccination rates in India have dipped in the past months with detected cases plateauing. Around 940 million people, or 67% of the population, have received the first two shots, but only 15% of them have received a third booster shot.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Europe struggles to contain energy crisis |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-france-germany-prices-da1d935fa8bcb4c283f7c5b559a5c9a |
| GIST | <p>FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Europe is struggling to contain an energy crisis that could lead to rolling blackouts, shuttered factories and a deep recession.</p> <p>The primary cause: Russia has choked off the supplies of cheap natural gas that the continent depended on for years to run factories, generate electricity and heat homes. That has pushed European governments into a desperate scramble for new supplies and for ways to blunt the impact as economic growth slows and household utility bills rise.</p> <p>The crisis deepened when Russia's state-owned exporter Gazprom said the main pipeline carrying gas to Germany would stay closed, blaming an oil leak and claiming the problems could not be fixed because of sanctions barring many dealings with Russia.</p> <p>European officials say it's energy blackmail, aimed at pressuring and dividing the European Union as it supports Ukraine against Russia's invasion.</p> <p>Here is the latest on Europe's efforts to avoid an energy disaster:</p> <p>DID RUSSIA CUT OFF GAS TO EUROPE? Just about. The halt in the Nord Stream 1 pipeline means Russian gas shipments have fallen 89% from a year ago. Russia used to supply 40% of Europe's natural gas, and even more to Germany, where inexpensive energy was a pillar of the economy.</p> <p>There's still some Russian gas flowing to Europe through a pipeline passing through Ukraine into Slovakia, and another crossing the Black Sea to Turkey and then to EU member Bulgaria. Russia started cutting back gas as early as last summer, before the war in Ukraine started. That sent gas prices sharply higher.</p> <p>Then Gazprom cut off a number of European countries after they responded to the outbreak of the war by banning many dealings with Russian banks, businesses and persons.</p> <p>The reductions have led to soaring natural gas prices, which have hit records in the past few weeks. Given Russia's slow constriction of supplies since last summer, experts say Europe needs to be ready for zero Russian gas this winter.</p> <p>WHY IS RUSSIAN GAS SO IMPORTANT? High energy prices are already threatening to cause a recession this winter through record inflation, with consumers having less to spend as costs rise for food, fuel and utilities. A complete cutoff could deal an even heavier blow to an already troubled economy.</p> <p>Besides heating homes and generating electricity, gas is used to fire a range of industrial processes that most people never think much about — forging steel to go into cars, making glass bottles and pasteurizing milk and cheese.</p> <p>Companies warn that they often can't switch overnight to other energy sources such as fuel oil or electricity to produce heat. And, with everyone searching for alternate supplies, fuel oil and coal have also risen in price.</p> <p>In some cases, equipment that holds molten metal or glass is ruined if the heat is turned off, and over the longer term, energy-intensive businesses may simply give up on Europe.</p> <p>IS THE PROBLEM JUST ABOUT HIGH NATURAL GAS PRICES? No. Electricity prices also have skyrocketed because gas is a key fuel to generate power. To make matters worse, other sources of power have lagged for reasons not connected to Russia.</p> |

Drought has undermined hydroelectric power from rivers and reservoirs. France's fleet of 56 nuclear power plants is running at half-strength because of shutdowns over corrosion problems in key pipes and repairs, updating and safety checks. A heat wave limited use of river water for cooling power plants, and [lower water levels on Germany's Rhine River](#) reduced supplies of coal to generators.

In a role reversal, [France is talking about sending natural gas to Germany](#), while [Germany is exporting electricity to France](#). Usually it's the other way around.

Analysts at Rystad Energy say Europe could face a serious electricity shortage as soon as this month. This winter, a worst case of cold weather, low wind generation and a 15% cut in gas use "would prove very challenging for the European power system, and could lead to power rationing and blackouts."

"Regardless of the exact scenario, the coming winter is certain to be the most challenging Europe has seen in decades — and consumers or governments are expected to pay the price," said Carlos Torres-Diaz, head of power at Rystad Energy. "If gas demand needs to be cut, we expect to see power supply issues emerging this month and worsening into 2023."

WHAT IS EUROPE DOING TO EASE THE CRISIS?

Europe has lined up all the alternative gas supplies it could: shipments of [liquefied natural gas, or LNG, that come by ship from the United States](#) and more pipeline gas from Norway and Azerbaijan. LNG is much more expensive than pipeline gas, however.

Germany is keeping coal plants in operation that it was going to shutter to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#). It also is keeping the option of reactivating two nuclear plants it's set to shut down.

The 27-nation EU has approved a plan to reduce gas use by 15% by next March, roughly the amount experts say will need to make up for the loss of Russian gas. Yet those [conservation measures](#) are voluntary in member countries for now.

National governments have approved a raft of measures: bailouts for utilities forced to pay exorbitant prices for Russian gas, cash for hard-hit households and tax breaks.

For example, Germany has approved a [third support package](#) with 65 billion euros (\$64.3 billion) in aid for consumers. That kind of spending will add to national deficits but also soften the downturn that economists are predicting for the end of this year and beginning of next year.

More steps are coming. The president of the EU's executive Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, says a [new proposal will include a price cap on natural gas](#) and measures that could decouple the price of electricity from gas.

Perhaps most important in the short term, Europe has managed to fill 82% of its [storage for winter](#) with the help of LNG and diminished consumption because of high prices. [Storage levels have kept rising](#) even after the Nord Stream 1 cutoff.

Partly as result, gas prices have fallen to their pre-cutoff level, although they are still painfully high.

WHAT'S RUSSIA'S GAME?

Even as gas sales dwindled, skyrocketing prices helped maintain Russia's income from those sales. Oil and gas imports were initially exempt from sanctions because Europe was dependent on Russian energy. Europe has banned Russian coal and will ban most Russian oil at the end of the year.

[Russia's revenue from fossil fuel exports](#) reached 158 billion euros from February to August, according to the Helsinki-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

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| | <p>But oil has tended to be the Kremlin's main moneymaker, and unlike gas in fixed pipelines to Europe, can be sold worldwide by tanker. And the gas relationship with Europe may be gone for good — and with it, any influence it might have brought.</p> <p>“The gas flows from Europe no longer play a role in my calculations,” German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck said. “The only reliable thing from Russia are lies.”</p> <p>So if Russian President Vladimir Putin thinks he has any leverage from gas, time is running out for him to use it.</p> <p>“Russia has lost nothing now that it hadn't lost already ... this winter is the last chance to use the gas weapon, successfully or not,” tweeted Janis Kluge, an expert on the Russian economy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Will NKorea weapons help Russia? |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-seoul-moscow-491ad47f3d26b441953a7319838817b9 |
| GIST | <p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea is apparently moving to sell millions of rockets and artillery shells — many of them likely from its old stock — to its Cold War ally Russia.</p> <p>Russia has called a U.S. intelligence report on the purchasing plan “fake.” But U.S. officials say it shows Russia's desperation with the war in Ukraine and that Moscow could buy additional military hardware from North Korea.</p> <p>The ammunitions North Korea reportedly intends to sell to Moscow are likely copies of Soviet-era weapons that can fit Russian launchers. But there are still questions over the quality of the supplies and how much they could actually help the Russian military.</p> <p>— WHAT EXACTLY WILL NORTH KOREA SUPPLY TO RUSSIA?</p> <p>Slapped by international sanctions and export controls, Russia in August bought Iranian-made drones that U.S. officials said had technical problems. For Russia, North Korea is likely another good option for its ammunitions supply, because the North keeps a significant stockpile of shells, many of them copies of Soviet-era ones.</p> <p>North Korea “may represent the single biggest source of compatible legacy artillery ammunition outside of Russia, including domestic production facilities to further supplies,” said Joseph Dempsey, research associate for defense and military analysis at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).</p> <p>Lee Illwoo, an expert with the Korea Defense Network in South Korea, said both North and South Korea - split along the world's most heavily fortified border for more than 70 years -- keep tens of millions of artillery shells each. North Korea will likely sell older shells that it wants to replace with newer ones for multiple rocket launch systems or sophisticated missiles in its front-line army bases, he said.</p> <p>But Bruce Bennett, a senior security expert at the California-based Rand Corporation, said most of the artillery rounds to be sent to Russia are likely to be ammunition for small arms, such as AK-47 rifles or machine guns.</p> <p>“It's not millions of artillery shells and rockets – that's more than the likely consumption. It could be millions of small arms rounds,” Bennett said.</p> <p>— HOW GOOD ARE NORTH KOREAN WEAPONS?</p> <p>According to an IISS assessment, North Korea has an estimated 20,000 artillery pieces including multiple rocket launchers in service, a number that Dempsey described as “significantly more than any other country in the world.”</p> |

North Korea's state media have called its artillery guns "the first arm of the People's Army and the most powerful arm in the world" that can reduce enemy position into "a sea of flames."

But its old artillery systems, whose ammunitions will likely be supplied to Russia, have a reputation for poor accuracy.

During North Korea's artillery bombardment of South Korea's front-line Yeonpyeong Island in 2010 that killed four people, Bennett said that only 80 of the 300-400 weapons North Korea should have fired likely hit their target. In his assessment, Lee said about half of the North Korean shells launched ended up falling into waters before reaching the island.

"That is miserable artillery performance. The Russians may experience the same thing, which will not make them very happy," Bennett said.

Observers doubt the usefulness of North Korean ammunition for the Russian campaign in Ukraine, which they say has depleted the military. There have been photos of barrel-busted Russian guns on social media.

It's unclear how serious Russian shortage of ammunitions is. In July, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters that Russia was launching tens of thousands artillery rounds each day and couldn't keep it up forever.

"While substantial stockpiles likely still exist, they may be increasingly infringing on those reserved for the contingency of a wider future conflict," Dempsey said.

NO NORTH KOREAN MISSILES EXPECTED

It's unlikely for North Korea to provide Russia with ballistic missiles that it views as crucial in its military strategies toward Washington and Seoul, said Yang Uk, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

And if North Korea decides to supply missiles to Russia, it would need to send their launch platforms as well because Russia doesn't have launchers for the North's Scuds and other missiles. North Korea has developed a highly maneuverable, nuclear-cable ballistic missile that was likely modeled on Russia's Iskander. But the two missiles are of different sizes, according to Shin Jongwoo, a military expert at the Seoul-based Korea Defense and Security Forum.

There would be a number of items that North Korea could provide to Russia, given that the two countries share weapons systems going back to Soviet times. But the type of ammunitions North Korea would provide to Russia "are likely to be old and somewhere close to expiring," said Moon Seong Mook, an analyst at South Korea's Korea Research Institute for National Strategy.

WHAT COULD NORTH KOREA GET IN RETURN?

In return for weapons, North Korea will likely want food, fuel, warplane components and other materials from Russia. The North finds it difficult to buy such goods from abroad under U.N. sanctions [imposed over its nuclear program](#), Shin said.

Yang said it's possible that North Korea is seeking advanced Russian weapons technologies that would boost its efforts to build more powerful, high-tech missiles targeting the United States and its allies.

"That would certainly be the worst scenario," Yang said.

According to Bennett, North Korea would be willing to be compensated with fuel. For its more advanced arms, it could seek advanced weapons technologies from Russia, possibly including those it needs for its expected nuclear test, the first of its kind in five years, he said.

He said it would be difficult for Russia and North Korea to move the ammunitions over their narrow 15-kilometer (9-mile) long border, where there's only one, single-track rail bridge across a river. Bennett said

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| | China may help by allowing the use of its railways. Other experts say North Korea and Russia could use a sea route as well as their cross-border railway. |
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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Putin: Russia will press on, achieve goals |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-crimea-government-and-politics-035067e68d10cc4a27bcc5260ab20db9 |
| GIST | <p>MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Moscow will press on with its military action in Ukraine until reaching its goals and mocked Western attempts to drive Russia into a corner with sanctions.</p> <p>Putin told at an annual economic forum in the far-eastern port city of Vladivostok that the main goal behind sending troops into Ukraine was protecting civilians in the east of that country after eight years of fighting.</p> <p>“It wasn’t us who started the military action, we are trying to put an end to it,” Putin said, reaffirming his argument that he sent troops into Ukraine to protect Moscow-backed separatist regions in Ukraine, which have fought Ukrainian forces in the conflict that erupted in 2014 following Russia’s annexation of Crimea.</p> <p>“All our action has been aimed at helping people living in the Donbas, it’s our duty and we will fulfill it until the end,” he said.</p> <p>Putin claimed that Russia has strengthened its sovereignty in the face of Western sanctions, which he said bordered on an aggression.</p> <p>“Russia has resisted the economic, financial and technological aggression of the West,” Putin said. “I’m sure that we haven’t lost anything and we won’t lose anything. The most important gain is the strengthening of our sovereignty, it’s an inevitable result of what’s going one.”</p> <p>The Russian leader acknowledged that the national economy will shrink by 2% this year, but said that the economic and financial situation in Russia has stabilized, consumer prices inflation has slowed down and unemployment has remained low.</p> <p>“There has been a certain polarization in the world and inside the country, but I view it as a positive thing,” he added. “Everything unnecessary, harmful, everything that has prevented us from going forward will be rejected and we will gain development tempo because development can only be based on sovereignty.”</p> <p>Putin emphasized that Russia will keep protecting its sovereignty in the face of what he described as an attempt by the U.S. and its allies to preserve their global domination, saying that “the world mustn’t be founded on the diktat of one country that deemed itself the representative of the almighty or even higher and based its policies on its perceived exclusivity.”</p> <p>He scoffed at Western attempts to cap prices for Russian oil and gas, calling the idea “stupid” and saying that Russia will have enough customers in Asia. “The demand is so high on global markets that we won’t have any problem selling it,” he said.</p> <p>“An attempt to limit prices by administrative means is just ravings, it’s sheer nonsense,” Putin said, adding that “it will only lead to a hike in prices.”</p> <p>“If they try to implement this dumb decision, it will entail nothing good for those who will make it,” he warned. “Will they make political decisions contradicting contracts? In that case, we will just halt supplies if it contradicts our economic interests. We won’t supply any gas, oil, diesel oil or coal.”</p> |

Putin noted that “those who try to enforce something on us aren’t in a position today to dictate their will,” pointing at protests in the West against rising energy prices.

He rejected the EU’s argument that Russia was using energy as a weapon by suspending gas supplies via the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline to Germany.

Putin reaffirmed the Russian argument that Western sanctions have hampered maintenance of the last turbine that remains in operation, forcing its shutdown.

He repeated that Moscow stands ready to “press the button” and start pumping gas “as early as tomorrow” through the Nord Stream 2, which has been put on hold by the German authorities.

Commenting on scores of critical media outlets being forced to shut down after the start of the military campaign in Ukraine following the passage of a new law that criminalized any reporting on military action that differs from the official line, Putin said their reporters were happy to leave the country.

“They were always working against our country while they were here, and now they happily moved out,” he said.

Russia’s top independent newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, was among the outlets that were forced to shut down under official pressure. On Monday, a court in Moscow upheld a motion from Russian authorities to revoke its license.

Dmitry Muratov, Nobel Peace Prize-winning editor-in-chief of the newspaper, called the ruling on Monday “political” and “not having the slightest legal basis.”

Putin sought to slight Muratov’s prize, describing it as politically driven and, in a side jab, compared it to the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Barack Obama while he was the U.S. president.

“We had business-like relations with President Obama, but what did they give him the Nobel prize for?” Putin said. “What did he do to help protect peace? I mean military operations in some regions of the world the president conducted.”

Commenting on the European Union’s decision to make it harder for Russian citizens to enter the 27-nation bloc, Putin said that Russia won’t respond in kind and will continue to welcome visitors.

“We aren’t going to halt contacts, and those who do it, they isolate themselves and not us,” he said.

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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Putin, Xi to meet at a summit in Uzbekistan |
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| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-china-beijing-xi-jinping-84239cfea4b649e3d184561ffc734622 |
| GIST | <p>MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping will meet next week at a summit in Uzbekistan, a Russian official said Wednesday.</p> <p>The two leaders will meet at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, held in the Uzbek city of Samarkand on Sept. 15-16, Russian Ambassador to China Andrei Denisov told reporters.</p> <p>“Less than 10 days from now another meeting of our leaders will take place at the SCO summit in Samarkand. We are actively preparing for it,” Denisov was quoted by Russia’s state news agency Tass as saying.</p> <p>The visit to Uzbekistan, if it goes ahead, will be Xi’s first foreign trip in 2½ years. Russian media also reported Xi’s plans to visit Kazakhstan prior to the summit in Uzbekistan, but the reports have remained unconfirmed.</p> |

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| | <p>When asked about the Uzbekistan trip, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a daily briefing Wednesday: “On your question, I have nothing to offer.”</p> <p>Putin and Xi last met in Beijing in February, weeks before the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine. The two presidents oversaw the signing of an agreement pledging that relations between the sides would have “no limits.” It remains unclear whether Xi knew at the time of Russia’s plan to launch what Moscow is calling “a special military operation” in Ukraine.</p> <p>While offering its tacit support for Russia’s campaign in Ukraine, China has sought to appear neutral and avoid possible repercussions from supporting the Russian economy amid international sanctions.</p> <p>Moscow and Beijing have increasingly aligned their foreign policies to oppose liberal democratic forces in Asia, Europe and beyond, making a stand for authoritarian rule with tight borders and little regard for free speech, minority rights or opposition politics.</p> <p>The Russian military held sweeping military drills that began last week and ended Wednesday in the country’s east that involved forces from China, another show of increasingly close ties between Moscow and Beijing amid tensions with the West over the military action in Ukraine.</p> <p>Even though Moscow and Beijing in the past rejected the possibility of forging a military alliance, Putin has said that such a prospect can’t be ruled out. He also has noted that Russia has been sharing highly sensitive military technologies with China that helped significantly bolster its defense capability.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Covid winding down? Scientists say ‘no’ |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-pandemics-flu-c92b8653683afbac3d81eebff8f5d29d |
| GIST | <p>Is the coronavirus on its way out?</p> <p>You might think so. New, updated booster shots are being rolled out to better protect against the variants circulating now. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has dropped COVID-19 quarantine and distancing recommendations. And more people have thrown off their masks and returned to pre-pandemic activities.</p> <p>But scientists say no. They predict the scourge that’s already lasted longer than the 1918 flu pandemic will linger far into the future.</p> <p>One reason it’s lasted this long? It’s gotten better and better at getting around immunity from vaccination and past infection. Scientists point to emerging research that suggests the latest omicron variant gaining ground in the U.S. — BA.4.6, which was responsible for around 8% of new U.S. infections last week — appears to be even better at evading the immune system than the dominant BA.5.</p> <p>Scientists worry the virus may well keep evolving in worrisome ways.</p> <p>HOW LONG WILL IT BE AROUND?</p> <p>White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said COVID-19 will likely be with us for the rest of our lives.</p> <p>Experts expect COVID-19 will someday become endemic, meaning it occurs regularly in certain areas according to established patterns. But they don’t think that will be very soon.</p> <p>Still, living with COVID “should not necessarily be a scary or bad concept,” since people are getting better at fighting it, Jha said during a recent question-and-answer session with U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont. “Obviously if we take our foot off the gas — if we stop updating our vaccines, we stop getting new treatments — then we could slip backwards.”</p> |

Experts say COVID will keep causing serious illness in some people. The COVID-19 Scenario Modeling Hub made some pandemic projections spanning August 2022 to May 2023, assuming the new tweaked boosters adding protection for the newest omicron relatives would be available and a booster campaign would take place in fall and winter. In the most pessimistic scenario — a new variant and late boosters — they projected 1.3 million hospitalizations and 181,000 deaths during that period. In the most optimistic scenario — no new variant and early boosters — they projected a little more than half the number of hospitalizations and 111,000 deaths.

Eric Topol, head of Scripps Research Translational Institute, said the world is likely to keep seeing repetitive surges until “we do the things we have to do,” such as developing next generation vaccines and rolling them out equitably.

Topol said the virus “just has too many ways to work around our current strategies, and it’ll just keep finding people, finding them again, and self-perpetuating.”

HOW WILL THE VIRUS MUTATE?

Scientists expect more genetic changes that affect parts of the spike protein studding the surface of the virus, letting it attach to human cells.

“Every time we think we’ve seen the peak transmission, peak immune escape properties, the virus exceeds that by another significant notch,” Topol said.

But the virus probably won’t keep getting more transmissible forever.

“I think there is a limit,” said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. “What we’re really dealing with, though, is there’s still a lot of people across the world who don’t have any prior immunity — either they haven’t been infected or they haven’t had access to vaccination.”

If humanity’s baseline level of immunity rises significantly, he said, the rate of infections, and with that emergence of more contagious variants, should slow down.

But there is a chance the virus could mutate in a way that causes more severe illness.

“There’s not any inherent reason, biologically, that the virus has to become milder over time,” said Dr. Wesley Long, a pathologist at Houston Methodist. The fact it may seem milder now “is likely just the combined effect of all of us having some immune history with the virus.”

While scientists hope that continues, they also point out that immunity gradually wanes.

WILL THE NEXT VARIANT BE ANOTHER VERSION OFOMICRON?

Omicron has been around since late last year, with a series of super transmissible versions quickly displacing one another, and Binnicker believes “that will continue at least for the next few months.”

But down the road, he said it’s likely a new variant distinct from omicron will pop up.

The recent wave of infections and re-infections, he said, “gives the virus more chances to spread and mutate and new variants to emerge.”

CAN PEOPLE INFLUENCE THE FUTURE OF THE VIRUS?

Yes, experts said. One way is to get vaccinated and boosted.

“We have a virus out there that’s still circulating, still killing hundreds of Americans every day,” Jha said in a press briefing Tuesday. But, he added: “We now have all of the capability to prevent, I believe, essentially all of those deaths. If people stay up to date on their vaccines, if people get treated if they have a breakthrough infection, we can make deaths from this virus vanishingly rare.”

Not only does vaccination protect against severe disease and death, it raises the level of immunity globally.

CDC director Rochelle Walensky said Tuesday that up to 100,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations and 9,000 deaths could be prevented if Americans get the updated booster at the same rate they typically get an annual flu shot this fall. About half of Americans are typically vaccinated against the flu each year.

People can also keep protecting themselves by taking other precautions like, for example, wearing masks indoors when COVID rates are high.

Longtime nurse Catherine Mirabile said it’s important not to dismiss the dangers of the coronavirus – which sickened her twice, nearly killed her husband and left them both with long COVID. Daily deaths still average around 450 in the U.S.

“People really need to look at this and still take this seriously,” said the 62-year-old from Princeton, West Virginia, who is now on disability. “They could end up in the same shape we’re in.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Army recruitment at historic lows |
| SOURCE | https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11185413/Four-star-general-says-Americans-obese-criminal-join-armed-forces-defend.html |
| GIST | <p>Recruitment numbers for the Army are at historic lows as Americans are either too fat or criminal to join the defend the country, an Army general warned.</p> <p>Lt. Gen Xavier Brunson, the commander of Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, theorized as to why recruitment is so low following a July statement from the Army that announced it wouldn't meet its 485,000 recruitment goal for 2022, falling short by a staggering 20,000 recruits.</p> <p>Officers across the country are failing to meet recruitment numbers as fewer youth are qualified to serve, which some blame on the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>'Some of the challenges we have are obesity, we have pre-existing medical conditions, we have behavioral health problems, we have criminality, people with felonies, and we have drug use,' Brunson told Spokesman Review.</p> <p>'This is not an Army problem, this is an American Problem.'</p> <p>To increase recruitment numbers, the Army plans to 'lower the gates' and find new ways to appeal to the armed services to youth, especially amid a the lowest deficit since after the Vietnam War, according to the New York Times.</p> <p>'Only 23% of the people that are of age to serve are actually qualified,' Brunson said.</p> <p>'This is now a condition. This is not an Army problem, so nationally what we have to look at is what's going on with our youth.'</p> <p>About 73 percent of the younger generation aged 18 to 25 - Gen Z - said they know about the Army, but a recent national survey conducted by the US Army indicated otherwise.</p> |

The survey conducted in June found that youth knew little about Army benefits, including home-buying, early retirement and educational benefits.

More than half also thought soldiers have poor work-life balance.

To appeal to young recruits, the Army plans on shifting its recruitment focus by deploying 'influencers.'

The Army plans to maintain its standards, focus on quality, and invest in youth. Educators will be a key component in reaching potential recruits by teaching the various opportunities the army offers, Brunson said.

Brunson highlighted one new effort, the Future Soldier Program in South Carolina, that strives to help potential recruits prepare for academic and physical requirements to enlist.

Officers anticipate the 90-day program will increase quality by allowing potential soldiers to prepare before officially enrolling.

'There are people who can be led from the front, but there are a certain number of people with a desire to serve who can be led from behind a little bit,' Brunson said.

Monetary efforts to increase recruits are also being deployed with enlistment bonuses offered up to \$50,000, and bonuses up to \$35,000 for soldiers who ship out within 45 days, according to [General James McConville](#), US Army Chief of Staff.

'I think we just want to show people that the military is a viable option,' Sgt. Jesse Wallace from a Spokane recruitment office told Spokesman Review.

'We don't want it to be seen as a last resort.'

McConville first initiated the goal to recruit more soldiers in July when he first [said](#) that only 23 percent of Americans are qualified to serve, and 83 percent of young soldiers come from a military background.

He called the armed service 'a pathway to success' while echoing the need to 'upgrade' how the military branch prepares young recruits physically and academically.

The Army General blamed the low number of qualified Americans on the pandemic.

'I think we're just going to have to work out way through that,' McConville said at the time.

'I think us, as a military and an Army, we have to invest in these young men and women. We want them to have the opportunity to serve, and I think it's going to take a little more work on our behalf, and we're prepared to do that. We are not going to lower our standards.'

Aside from the Army, the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps are also receiving less recruits.

The announcement of fewer recruits also comes after thousands of unvaccinated Army National Guard and Army reserve soldiers were expected to be barred from performing their military duties after refusing to get the COVID-19 jab.

As of July, there were about 40,000 National Guard soldiers and 22,000 Reserve soldiers who have not been vaccinated.

Meanwhile, more than 10,000 soldiers requested either a medical or religious exemption with only 61 being permanently approved and 17,046 temporary approved as of August, according to the [US Army](#). About 16,000 soldiers continue to refuse the jab.

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| | <p>The military branch has raised the stakes for soldiers and promised to go one further and discharge personnel if they continue to resist immunization. Soldiers were required to be vaccinated by July 1.</p> <p>'Soldiers who refuse the vaccination order without an approved or pending exemption request are subject to adverse administrative actions, including flags, bars to service, and official reprimands,' an Army representative said in July.</p> <p>'In the future, soldiers who continue to refuse the vaccination order without an exemption may be subject to additional adverse administrative action, including separation.'</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Election offices beef up security |
| SOURCE | https://dnyuz.com/2022/09/06/cameras-plexiglass-fireproofing-election-officials-beef-up-security/ |
| GIST | <p>In Wisconsin, one of the nation's key swing states, cameras and plexiglass now fortify the reception area of a county election office in Madison, the capital, after a man wearing camouflage and a mask tried to open locked doors during an election in April.</p> <p>In another bellwether area, Maricopa County, Ariz., where beleaguered election workers had to be escorted through a scrum of election deniers to reach their cars in 2020, a security fence was added to protect the perimeter of a vote tabulation center.</p> <p>And in Colorado, the state's top election official, Jena Griswold, the secretary of state and a Democrat, resorted to paying for private security out of her budget after a stream of threats.</p> <p>As the nation hurtles closer to the midterm elections, those who will oversee them are taking a range of steps to beef up security for themselves, their employees, polling places and even drop boxes, tapping state and federal funding for a new set of defenses. The heightened vigilance comes as violent rhetoric from the right intensifies and as efforts to intimidate election officials by those who refuse to accept the results of the 2020 election become commonplace.</p> <p>Discussing security in a recent interview with The Times, Ms. Griswold, 37, said that threats of violence had kept her and her aides up late at night as they combed through comments on social media.</p> <p>At a right-wing group's gathering in Colorado earlier this year, she said, a prominent election denier with militia ties suggested that she should be killed. That was when she concluded that her part-time security detail provided by the Colorado State Patrol wasn't enough.</p> <p>"They called for me to be hung," said Ms. Griswold, who is running for re-election. "It's a long weekend. I'm home alone, and I only get seven hours of State Patrol coverage."</p> <p>Even in places where there was never a shadow of a doubt about the political leanings of the electorate, election officials have found themselves under threat. In a Texas county that President Donald J. Trump won by 59 percentage points in 2020, all three election officials recently resigned, with at least one citing repeated death threats and stalking.</p> <p>One in five local election officials who responded to a survey earlier this year by the Brennan Center for Justice said that they were "very" or "somewhat unlikely" to continue serving through 2024.</p> <p>The collective angst is a recurring theme at workshops and conferences attended by election officials, who say it is not unusual for them exchange anecdotes about threatening messages or harassment at the grocery store. The discussions have turned at times to testing drop boxes — a focus of right-wing attacks on mail-in voting — to see if they can withstand being set on fire.</p> <p>Benjamin Hovland, a member of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, described the intimidation campaign as pervasive.</p> |

“This isn’t a red-state issue or a blue-state issue,” Mr. Hovland said in a recent interview. “This is a national issue, where the professional public servants that run our elections have been subjected to an unprecedented level of threats, harassment and intimidating behavior.”

In [guidance](#) issued in June, the Election Assistance Commission allowed for federal election grants to be used for physical security services and to monitor threats on social media.

In Wisconsin’s Dane County, which includes Madison, partisan poll watchers and a brigade of lawyers with the Trump campaign descended in 2020 to dispute the election results. County officials recently budgeted \$95,000 to start designing a new and more secure election center.

The move came after the U.S. Department of Homeland Security conducted a risk assessment in April on the current election offices for the county and city, which are housed in the same building.

“It’s kind of a sieve,” Scott McDonell, a Democrat and the county’s clerk for the past decade, said in an interview.

But with a new center likely to be a long way from fruition, more immediate steps were taken. In the past six months, security cameras and plexiglass were installed, according to Mr. McDonell, 53.

But those measures are just a “stopgap,” Mr. McDonell said, recalling the April episode when a masked man tried to enter several restricted areas during local elections.

“He’s all in camo, shaking on doors, trying to get into spaces and filming everything,” Mr. McDonell said. “That would never happen in a properly secured, laid-out building that was designed for elections.”

The emphasis on security has extended to the municipal level, with Dane County training local clerks for the first time last month on de-escalation techniques and how to respond to an active shooter, Mr. McDonell said.

Arizona’s most populous county, Maricopa, which includes Phoenix, was a nexus of efforts to overturn the 2020 election. The security fence erected around the county’s tabulation and elections center last year is 10 feet tall. Its purpose: to prevent a repeat of November 2020, when election workers were surrounded by a crowd of Trump loyalists, some of them armed, as the workers tried to get to their cars.

The security buildup didn’t end there. The county added new security cameras, including 23 with livestreaming capability, installed glass walls around a computer server and hired private security patrols to augment its own guards, said Scott Jarrett, the nonpartisan co-director of the county’s elections department.

A layer of protective film was also applied to all of the building’s windows to make them harder to break and to obscure employees’ faces, especially at night.

“Even someone with a hammer who was banging against it, I think the manufacturer said that someone could be doing that for a consistent five minutes, and it’s not going to break,” Mr. Jarrett said.

The county even built a vault with a fire-suppression system to hold ballots, according to Mr. Jarrett.

“There’s not an election official probably in the country right now who doesn’t have some concerns,” he said of the stressful working conditions for election workers. “Democracy, I think, is coming under assault.”

Michigan’s top election official, Jocelyn Benson, 44, who is a Democrat, has a security detail from the state when she needs it. In an interview, she described a time in December 2020 when a group [gathered](#)

[outside her Detroit home](#) to call for her to overturn the victory of Joseph R. Biden Jr. in Michigan. Some of them were armed.

“I was about to put my son to bed, and dozens of individuals descended on our home,” Ms. Benson said. A neighborhood security guard initially was the only one separating the home from the crowd, which shouted obscenities that she said woke up her neighbors.

“It was a very haunting moment,” said Ms. Benson, who was [interviewed about the confrontation as part of the congressional inquiry](#) into the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. “What it has created is an omnipresent feeling of anxiety and dread that permeates our daily lives.”

Michigan received \$8 million in federal election funds that Ms. Benson said local election officials could spend on physical security and efforts to tamp down misinformation.

Still, in [testimony last month before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee](#), Ms. Benson urged the federal government to set aside more money for security.

“To protect democracy, we must protect election officials,” Ms. Benson, who is running for re-election, said on Thursday.

In Colorado, Mr. Trump’s allies have frequently tussled over election oversight with Ms. Griswold, who said that her office had compiled a 60-page PDF detailing the hundreds of threats that she had received.

On two occasions, the threats have led to criminal charges: one man was [arrested in July](#) over a threatening phone call, and in June, a Nebraska man [pleaded guilty to threatening Ms. Griswold on Instagram](#). It was the first conviction resulting from the work of a [Justice Department task force](#) focused on the intimidation of election officials.

Ms. Griswold drew a comparison between those making violent threats toward election officials and the people who took part in the [Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol](#).

“We have to take threats of violence seriously,” Ms. Griswold said. “We have to disincentivize it.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Federal ‘revenue’ relief obscures spending |
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| SOURCE | https://crosscut.com/news/2022/09/how-federal-revenue-relief-obscures-local-government-spending |
| GIST | <p>Zeke Smith recalls feeling struck – not by the historic size but by the aspirations outlined in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act when Congress first passed it in March 2021.</p> <p>The federal relief plan set out to ensure an “equitable recovery,” acknowledging the pandemic had exacerbated systemic inequities, and issued a call to action for towns and counties: Use this aid money to address those disparities.</p> <p>As president of the Spokane-based Empire Health Foundation, Smith hopes to use those one-time resources to take on the region’s fast-growing homelessness crisis. The foundation recently convened a series of meetings with a coalition of service providers, advocates, business owners and government employees, crafting a pitch to local elected leaders for how to spend \$65 million of ARPA funds to make a dent in an issue that only seems to be getting worse.</p> <p>“[ARPA] represented this landmark investment that, if used right,” Smith said, “can make sustainable change at a local level across the country.”</p> <p>But a U.S. Treasury Department rule change in January, intended to lower burdens on spending and provide small governments with more flexibility, has resulted in jurisdictions claiming billions of local</p> |

ARPA dollars as “revenue replacement” — a broad, loosely restricted spending category that advocates say undermines ambitious public investments and transparency.

Other ARPA spending categories require officials to assign the money toward either mitigating negative economic impacts of COVID-19, utility infrastructure or bonuses for public employees. Federal rules require officials to closely track and publicly report expenditures. The newer Treasury change on revenue replacement dollars, however, allows qualifying small governments to direct up to \$10 million into their general budgets for “government services” with reduced oversight.

Local officials argue stricter administrative rules could overwhelm small accounting departments. But Smith and other community advocates say they fear putting so much money – more than \$752 million so far statewide – into “revenue replacement” squanders a historic chance at transformational change, reinforces status quo spending and cuts the public out of key discussions around the largest direct federal aid to local governments since the 1960s.

“The ability for governments to use [ARPA] for revenue replacement ... is the best – or worst – way to diffuse those resources so that you never even see the impact,” Smith said.

Millions of dollars, few details

Passed in March 2021, the American Rescue Plan was pitched as an economic booster shot, meant to both hasten recovery in the short term and address the far-reaching impacts of the pandemic. It offered more than double the amount of direct aid to state and local governments (\$350 billion) as the CARES Act, plus time and freedom rarely afforded by federal dollars, giving jurisdictions until 2024 to allocate and until 2026 to spend the money.

Eli Byerly-Duke, a senior research assistant at the Brookings Institution who works on their Local Government ARPA Investment Tracker, said that the aid program was designed to counteract what many Democratic lawmakers perceived as the shortcomings of the federal response to the 2008 economic crisis.

“There was a widespread sense after and during the Great Recession that too many working Americans paid the price of a big economic collapse that was not their fault, and that the recovery took too long to reach working people,” Byerly-Duke said. “Part of the takeaway that many had was that the federal government could have intervened more dramatically.”

Cities and counties must [submit annual reports](#) on the direct funding to the U.S. Treasury, fitting their expenditures into one of four categories and describing each project funded with ARPA dollars. For many smaller jurisdictions, the first report came due April 30, and Treasury released a [large batch of that data](#) in mid-July. But instead of itemized reports, entities that designate funds as revenue replacement can now check “yes” to the \$10 million allowance and report as much as they want – or nothing at all – about how that money will be spent.

Most Washington local governments have taken advantage of the new flexibility: Of 310 local governments in the state reporting expenses to the federal government, 267 governments, or 86%, had claimed the standard allowance, according to Treasury data. Of the nearly \$2.7 billion in direct dollars to local governments in Washington, officials have so far claimed 28% as revenue replacement, totaling more than \$752 million.

Of 21 counties that reported expenses under revenue replacement, a few provided detailed breakdowns of specific projects. Stevens County, in the northeast corner of Washington, submitted 16 reports detailing purchases as small as \$4,000 for membership dues to the Association of Washington Counties.

But others provided brief, general descriptions of millions in spending.

Wahkiakum County reported “funds used for salaries and operational services.” Franklin County submitted: “Funds to be used for various projects, priorities currently being identified.” Yakima County just wrote: “Revenue Replacement Funds.”

The abbreviated reporting process leaves it up to local governments to decide how much information to offer their residents about ARPA spending.

Seattle has an [interactive tracker](#) that breaks down each line item. Kenmore has a [webpage](#) with pie charts, FAQs and a drop-down menu with details about each allocation. They also did an [online poll](#) where residents could vote on specific programs.

But many counties across the state lack even a basic public accounting of where ARPA dollars are going. Unless residents regularly attend legislative meetings, comb through budget documents, or request the information directly from their representatives, relief dollars can be spent more or less invisibly.

Crosscut filed records requests with over 30 counties in Washington seeking line by line accountings of their ARPA allocations. Some returned detailed spreadsheets with descriptions of each expenditure; others offered lists with phrases like “sheriff equipment” or “website upgrade.” (Those documents are available in Crosscut’s Recovery Watch [Records Library](#).)

In some cases, county officials responded by citing revenue replacement without providing documents or offered minimal descriptions similar to those in the Treasury reports.

Benton County, which received \$19.8 million from ARPA, did provide documents showing about \$8 million in ARPA commitments. But multiple officials there consistently declined to say how the \$10 million the county claimed in “revenue replacement” was being used.

In response to an email inquiry from Crosscut, Benton County spokesperson Shyanne Palmus wrote that the \$10 million would be spent on “general government services ... for county departments and functions.”

Shon Small, chair of Benton’s Board of County Commissioners, directed questions about the \$10 million his county claimed in revenue replacement to Linda Ivey, the county’s finance manager, as did Benton County’s auditor. Ivey told Crosscut to file a records request, and did not reply to an emailed list of detailed questions about how the revenue replacement funds are tracked and allocated. An unsigned response to Crosscut’s records request indicated that the funds were deposited in the county’s general fund, but did not explain how they were spent.

Benton County’s website has no section dedicated to ARPA.

Transparency versus flexibility

Proponents of revenue replacement cast the additional flexibility as an essential part of empowering local governments to tailor their efforts to community needs. Jacob Ewing, legislative & policy analyst at the Association of Washington Cities, said smaller cities often lack the financial expertise or capacity to meet stricter compliance demands.

“There’s some of these towns where it’s literally one, not even one full-time employee – it’s one part-time employee that’s the clerk/treasurer,” Ewing said. “Figuring out how to use these funds, how to communicate with their city council, how to go about spending these dollars was definitely a challenge for them.”

Six Washington cities [turned down or otherwise failed to claim the direct ARPA funds](#), in some cases citing the extra paperwork associated with federal auditing requirements.

The Treasury rule change in January followed congressional calls for increased flexibility on the funding. Sens. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Alex Padilla (D-California) [sponsored a bipartisan bill](#) last year reducing the administrative burdens on the money. The bill never passed the House, but Treasury adopted a number of the provisions into its [Final Rule](#) on the spending.

A Treasury official wrote in an email to Crosscut that while revenue replacement allows for a “streamlined” reporting process, recipients are “still required to meet key reporting and document retention responsibilities, including submitting a description of services when reporting under ‘government services’ and retaining records detailing exactly how funds were spent in the event that an investigation or enforcement action is necessary.”

Missed opportunities

Byerly-Duke at Brookings said the additional flexibility offered by revenue replacement means local governments can decide to use the aid money to further equity and be responsive to community input – or not.

“What the revenue replacement dollars are most naturally set up to do is just to fund status quo government operations,” he said. “So in that sense, the revenue replacement encourages an equity-focused lens to the extent the recipient already had one.”

Franklin County Administrator Keith Johnson said his jurisdiction has so far focused ARPA funds on law enforcement and capital projects. About \$8 million was committed to renovate a complex of buildings that houses the courthouse and jail, and about \$700,000 went to the sheriff’s department to purchase a mobile command trailer, body armor, insurance, equipment and fuel (including \$8,000 for new tasers and guns).

Johnson said the county created a business grant program that could indirectly help underserved communities, but didn’t target any ARPA funds specifically to social services.

“That has not been a priority for us under ARPA,” he said, “but we could use that and we’re still considering where we want to direct this spending that hasn’t been decided yet.”

Nonprofit leaders say officials must engage with local communities on how to spend revenue replacement if they want to meet the equity ambitions embedded in the American Rescue Plan. A [recent report](#) from the Southern Economic Advancement Project found just 20 of 44 Washington cities under review had specific equity strategies attached to their spending. They found clear community outreach efforts at just 17 of 52 Washington cities.

“Even though it’s voluntary, [the community’s] voice deserves to be at the table and deserves to be heard,” said Sarah Beth Gehl, executive director of SEAP. “The dollars might be harder to uncover if it’s revenue replacement or government services, and so it’s all the more necessary for community organizations, for organizers to be engaged and active in unpacking that and really pushing government officials to unpack that for the public.”

Smith of Empire Health said that so far two local governments – the cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley – have dedicated ARPA money to affordable housing. Though he welcomes those efforts, it’s a far cry from the coalition’s vision of a fundamental reshaping of the homeless response system.

Stretching the money imperceptibly to keep the system on autopilot, Smith said, misses the point of ARPA’s promise.

“The fear I have,” he said, “is that we miss this incredible opportunity to make a difference with a resource we’re not likely to see again.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 NYC housing water: toxic arsenic levels |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/06/toxic-arsenic-levels-tap-water-unsafe-nyc |
| GIST | Dangerous levels of arsenic were found in a New York City Public Housing Authority (NYCHA) complex, leaving thousands of affected residents without safe tap water. |

The crisis plays out as people in the predominantly Black city of [Jackson, Mississippi](#), have gone without clean drinking water for more than a month, with residents using bottled water for everyday needs like cooking and brushing teeth.

Residents of New York City's Jacob Riis Houses, one of the largest public housing complexes in the Manhattan borough, have not had safe drinking water for more than a week after arsenic levels above federal standards were found in the building's water supply.

As of Monday, tenants were told to continue avoiding the building's tap water as officials await additional test results, though most recent testing over the weekend found no arsenic in the complex's water supply, [NBC New York](#) reported.

The NYCHA has been handing out bottled water to residents in the wake of the test results, but many have condemned the agency for failing to inform residents of the potentially contaminated water supply.

Tap water in the complex, which contains 19 buildings and has more than 3,700 residents, [was first tested by NYCHA](#) in August after several complaints from residents about cloudy, brown water.

But, as [first reported by New York-based publication The City](#), residents were only informed of the arsenic contamination last Friday, despite officials knowing about the test results two weeks earlier.

"We don't drink their water," said Riis resident Malina Barbosa, who told CITY that tenants had not been told about the water issues. "It kind of smells. When they turn it off and it comes back on, it's brown."

Last Friday in the late evening, a NYCHA official informed The City that New York City mayor Eric Adams would be handing out bottled water to residents in the complex but would not be responding to press questions.

The NYCHA later that day confirmed to The City that water in the public housing complex had previously tested positive for arsenic, but those test results had reportedly only been confirmed that day.

A spokesperson for Adams also confirmed the positive test result in a subsequent statement to The City.

The mayor's spokesperson wrote: "Preliminary results received today from retesting showed arsenic levels higher than the federal standard for drinking water, and while there is no evidence linking it to the cloudy water, the city has taken immediate action, including providing support and drinking water to every household at Riis while we conduct additional water testing."

An investigation is being conducted on how the Riis complex's water supply became contaminated in the first place, and the NYCHA has been instructed to keep all paper documents connected to the arsenic investigation, The City reported.

[Exposure to arsenic](#) has been linked to several types of cancer and lower IQ scores in children.

The NYCHA has previously faced intense scrutiny for its mishandling of past complaints, including rats, mold, and other blighted conditions.

The agency was [under a US justice department investigation in 2016](#) about the health and safety of its building developments, including elevated lead levels in the blood of its residents, and it is [currently under the oversight of a federal monitor](#).

The current issues in Jackson and with the NYCHA's water system form of a larger infrastructure problem plaguing much of America's drinking water infrastructure, particularly in marginalized communities.

"For the longest [time], I have been experiencing dirty water, and now we got to the point where we ain't got no water," 30-year-old Jackson resident Kendrick Hart [recently told the Guardian](#).

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Ukraine: West reluctant to put Putin on trial |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/06/west-reluctant-to-put-putin-on-trial-say-ukrainian-officials |
| GIST | <p>Ukraine's major western allies have yet to sign up to establish a tribunal to try Vladimir Putin and his inner circle for the crime of aggression, wanting to leave space for future relations with Russia, according to Ukraine's top officials.</p> <p>"It's big politics. On the one hand, countries publicly condemn the aggression but on the other, they are putting their foot in the closing door on relations with Russia so that it doesn't close completely," said Andriy Smyrnov, deputy head of Ukraine's presidential administration, who is leading the country's effort to establish the international tribunal.</p> <p>"They are attempting to keep some space for diplomatic manoeuvres," said Smyrnov. "We know that agreements with Russia are not worth the paper they are written on."</p> <p>His claims come as the US president, Joe Biden, said on Monday that Russia should not be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism, something Ukrainian officials and some US politicians had pushed for. Russia had previously said such a designation would mean Washington had crossed the point of no return.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials say that since April, they have been trying to convince their western allies to establish an ad hoc tribunal which would hold Russia's senior leadership responsible for the crime of aggression for invading Ukraine. Aggression is viewed as the supreme crime under international law because without the transgression of borders during an invasion, subsequent war crimes would not have been committed.</p> <p>So far only the Baltic states and Poland have pledged support for the tribunal, said Ukraine's officials.</p> <p>"We are expecting broader support," said Ukraine's prosecutor general, Andriy Kostin. "For us, the support of the UK and the US is very important as well as the rest of the civilised world," said Smyrnov.</p> <p>The UK's newly elected prime minister, Liz Truss, told Times Radio in May, when she was foreign secretary, that she would consider supporting the tribunal. The Council of Europe is due to discuss support for such a measure on 13 September.</p> <p>At an event in Brussels on Monday, Andriy Yermak – chief adviser to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy – asked why there was a delay in creating the tribunal and said some European officials seemed convinced the international criminal court (ICC) was enough.</p> <p>At the same event, the European commissioner for justice, Didier Reynders, said he was open to the idea, but talked mainly about help the EU is giving to compile war crimes which can be referred to the ICC.</p> <p>Ukraine favours a one-off international tribunal to try the Russian leadership for aggression, which is not within the ICC's jurisdiction. The court is set to bring cases of war crimes which require prosecutors to identify the direct perpetrators of a crime and then trace the command structure upwards, making it difficult to reach the top echelons of the Russian regime.</p> <p>Western allies have, however, been reluctant to move to try Putin and other senior figures, an act that would probably end all relations. Ukraine believes this is an indication that, despite the scale of atrocities and public declarations against Russia, some of its allies envisage possible negotiations with Russia's current leadership.</p> <p>"It will be like trying the concentration camp directors and letting Hitler and his team walk free," said Oleh Gavrysh, part of Smyrnov's team in the presidential office. During the Nuremberg trials after the second world war, Nazi leaders were tried for the crime of aggression, which was then known as the crime against peace.</p> |

Ukraine's officials say the case would not need much investigation and would act as a straightforward mechanism to ensure the Kremlin's decision makers face responsibility since the fact that the act of aggression took place was [overwhelmingly accepted](#) by a vote at the UN general assembly and has been supported by [a resolution](#) of the European parliament. It has also been repeatedly [admitted by Putin](#) and his circle.

The legal arm of the Open Society Foundations [has drawn up](#) a preliminary indictment of Putin and seven of his closest allies for the crime of aggression. It said it hoped the document can demonstrate the feasibility of such a tribunal.

"When you help the ICC, you donate to the independent judicial authority and you are not linked somehow to the result," said Kostin, Ukraine's chief prosecutor. "When you support [a] tribunal, you act as a state, it's a political act and not all of them, at the moment, are ready to politically support this."

He added: "Russia is like *terra incognita* (unexplored territory) for many of them and some of them want to keep some room to, if not be friends again, but to have some relations, which I don't understand and no Ukrainians will understand."

Some states have viewed the idea of the tribunal with scepticism because Putin and his men would probably be tried in absentia, said Smyrnov.

"The main thing I want to say to the sceptic countries is that the creation of this tribunal ... is not a question of symbolism," said Smyrnov.

"It makes no difference if Putin is personally present at this tribunal. [If] the majority of civilised countries in the world sign this international agreement to establish the tribunal ... we will narrow down and limit the international allies of Putin.

"If Putin's circle is narrowed down to North Korea and Syria – that will be very good and if [Putin] dies in his own country labelled as an international criminal, that will be concrete punishment."

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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Day 196 of the Russia invasion |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/07/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-196-of-the-invasion |
| GIST | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UN has called for a demilitarised zone around Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. Secretary general António Guterres urged for the withdrawal of Russian occupying troops and the agreement of Ukrainian forces not to move in. "An agreement on a demilitarised perimeter should be secured," he said. "Specifically, that will include the commitment by Russian forces to withdraw military personnel and equipment from that perimeter and the commitment by Ukrainian forces not to move in." Russia's UN ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told reporters ahead of the council meeting, "if we demilitarise then the Ukrainians will immediately step in and ruin the whole thing."• The UN nuclear watchdog said its experts found extensive damage at the plant in a report presented to the UN security council on Tuesday. Director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, said his team closely witnessed shelling in the vicinity of the power plant and confirmed the presence of Russian soldiers and military equipment. The report also found Ukrainian staff were operating under constant high stress and pressure where there was an increased possibility of human error. "We are playing with fire and something very, very catastrophic could take place," Grossi said.• A "parallel" counteroffensive is occurring in eastern and northeastern Ukraine as well as in the south, a senior presidential adviser has claimed. "We are advancing and pressing almost along the entire frontline," Oleksiy Arestovych said on Telegram late on Tuesday night. "In the coming months, we can expect the defeat of the Russian army in the Kherson region on |

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| | <p>the western bank of the Dnieper and a significant advance of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the east.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukraine’s major western allies have yet to sign up to establish a tribunal to try Russian president Vladimir Putin and his inner circle for the crime of aggression, wanting to leave space for future relations with Russia, according to Ukraine’s top officials. “It’s big politics. On the one hand, countries publicly condemn the aggression but on the other, they are putting their foot in the closing door on relations with Russia so that it doesn’t close completely,” said Andriy Smyrnov, deputy head of Ukraine’s presidential administration. “They are attempting to keep some space for diplomatic manoeuvres ... agreements with Russia are not worth the paper they are written on.” • US president Joe Biden’s administration has rejected calls from Ukraine to brand Russia a “state sponsor of terrorism,” saying it would have “unintended consequences” to Ukraine and the world. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the designation would hamper aid delivery to Ukraine or prevent aid groups and companies from participating in a deal brokered by the UN and Turkey to ship grain from Ukraine’s blockaded ports. • Biden and newly appointed British prime minister, Liz Truss, have vowed to partner against Russia and show their “continued support for Ukraine as it defends itself against Russian aggression” after speaking by phone on Tuesday. A Downing Street spokesperson said Truss reiterated to the Ukrainian leader that he had her full backing, and Ukraine could depend on the UK’s assistance for the long term,” while Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said he felt the two leaders “will be able to build a profound and productive relationship”. |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Farmers face plague of pests as soil warms |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/06/us-farmers-face-plague-of-pests-as-global-heating-raises-soil-temperatures |
| GIST | <p>Agricultural pests that devour key food crops are advancing northwards in the US and becoming more widespread as the climate heats up, new research warns.</p> <p>The corn earworm (<i>Helicoverpa zea</i>) is considered to be among the most common farm pests in the US, ravaging crops such as maize, cotton, soya and other vegetables. It spends winter underground and is not known to survive in states beyond a latitude of 40 degrees north (which runs from northern California through the midwest to New Jersey), but that is changing as soils warm and it spreads to new areas, according to research led by North Carolina State University.</p> <p>The report follows research from the University of Washington in 2018 that found 2C (3.6F) of warming would boost the number and appetite of insects globally, causing them to destroy 50% more wheat and 30% more maize than they do now. Rising heat stress is already affecting yields, with harvests of staple crops in Europe down this year as a result of heatwaves and drought.</p> <p>Pest invasions have serious implications for food security. “As the climate changes, the overwintering zones are likely to shift northward,” said the co-author Anders Huseth, an entomologist at North Carolina State University. “This is the canary in the coalmine for agricultural pests.</p> <p>“Making sense of what’s taking place with [the corn earworm] is really important for agricultural producers.” Other pests that could spread northwards in the US in a similar way include fall armyworm, green cloverworm, soybean looper and velvetbean caterpillar.</p> <p>Researchers created maps that showed three distinct geographical zones across the US – the “southern range” where corn earworms survive winter, a “transitional zone” where they may survive winter, and “northern limits”, where they are generally unable to survive winter because soil temperatures drop below freezing.</p> |

Researchers already knew that warmer winter soils meant insects that live in the soil are more likely to survive. Using four decades of soil temperatures and data monitoring corn earworm, researchers predicted the distribution of pests in the future.

The southern range has grown by 3% since 1981 and is predicted to double in size by the end of the century, as the other zones get smaller, according to the paper, published in [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#). Corn earworm moths are able to disperse up to 600 miles (1,000km) using seasonal winds, meaning they can spread fast if conditions are good.

Over the coming decades the model illustrates that this insect could expand its overwintering range into the US maize belt in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Iowa. In Minnesota, for example, no corn earworms have successfully survived its harsh winters, but the models suggest the whole state will be in the transitional zone by the end of the century.

This could result in increased use of pesticides and lower yields. “If intensive maize production does not also shift north with changing climate, we expect that corn earworm will become a more frequent and important problem in these states,” said Dr Douglas Lawton, a former North Carolina State University postdoctoral researcher and co-author of the paper.

“Organic growers have a major challenge controlling this pest and often accept significant crop losses when infestations are high,” he said.

Monitoring soil temperatures could help predict the spread of pests, helping farmers control them more effectively, the report suggests. Huseeth said: “We’d like to come up with a better forecasting tool for this pest, along with a risk-prediction model, in order to give growers better information about pest spread. Success here could reduce both costs for farmers and pesticide into the environment.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Despite quake, China strict Covid lockdown |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/06/china-enforces-strict-covid-lockdown-in-chengdu-despite-fatal-earthquake |
| GIST | <p>Authorities in southwestern China’s Chengdu have maintained strict Covid-19 lockdown measures on the city of 21 million despite a big earthquake that killed at least 65 people in the region.</p> <p>Footage circulating online on Tuesday showed workers wearing top-to-bottom protective gear preventing residents of apartment buildings from exiting through locked lobby doors after the previous day’s 6.8 magnitude quake centered in the surrounding province of Sichuan.</p> <p>The quake struck a mountainous area in Luding county, which sits on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau roughly 200km (125 miles) from Chengdu, where tectonic plates grind up against each other.</p> <p>Despite only recording a handful of cases, Chengdu’s lockdown is the most severe since China’s largest city of Shanghai was placed in isolation over the summer, prompting rare protests in person and online.</p> <p>In all, 65 million Chinese in 33 cities including seven provincial capitals are now under varying levels of lockdown while the government is discouraging domestic travel during approaching national holidays.</p> <p>Outbreaks have been reported in 103 cities, the highest since the early days of the pandemic in early 2020.</p> <p>Most Chengdu residents are confined to their apartments or residential complexes. In the eastern port city of Tianjin, classes were moved online after a handful of new cases were reported.</p> <p>China’s authoritarian communist political system demands strict adherence to measures dictated by the central leadership overwhelmingly dominated by party leader Xi Jinping.</p> |

Local leaders, including Sichuan's recently appointed provincial party secretary, are often parachuted in from Beijing with little knowledge of local conditions and a firm mandate to carry out Xi's dictates.

The ruthless and often chaotic enforcement of the Shanghai lockdown led to widespread complaints over shortages of food, medication and access to healthcare. In a sign of how little has changed, at least one district in Chengdu has banned even the ordering of takeout meals and coffee, according to a notice posted on the internet.

China has stuck to its hard-line "zero-Covid" policy of compulsory testing, lockdowns, quarantines and masking despite advice from the World Health Organization and moves by most other countries to open up again since the virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

China on Tuesday reported 1,499 new cases of local infection, most of them asymptomatic. Sichuan accounted for 138 of that total figure.

The quake knocked out power and damaged buildings in the historic mountain town of Moxi in the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Garze, where 37 people were killed. Tents were erected for more than 50,000 people being moved from homes made unsafe by the quake, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

State broadcaster CCTV showed rescue crews pulling a woman who appeared uninjured from a collapsed home in Moxi, where many of the buildings are constructed from wood and brick. About 150 people were reported with varying degrees of injuries.

Another 28 people were killed in neighbouring Shimian county on the outskirts of the city of Ya'an. State media reported 248 people injured, mainly in Moxi, and another 16 people missing.

Along with the deaths, authorities reported landslides that damaged homes, caused power interruptions and stranded people behind a newly created lake. One landslide blocked a rural highway, leaving it strewn with boulders.

The earthquake and lockdown follow a heatwave and drought that led to water shortages and power cuts due to Sichuan's reliance on hydropower.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Schools confront severe learning losses |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/schools-are-back-and-confronting-devastating-learning-losses-11662472087?mod=hp_lead_pos5 |
| GIST | <p>ASHLAND CITY, Tenn.—Delainey Tidwell says she loves reading. The tricky part for her is understanding the words on the page.</p> <p>“I would read one sentence over and over again,” said the 9-year-old fourth-grader.</p> <p>Though she returned to school in August 2020, repeated quarantines left her mostly on her own at home. Her father is a construction supervisor who has to be on site. Her mother works from home but gets few breaks during the day. Delainey sometimes had to care for her little sister during virtual school.</p> <p>Delainey's difficulty with comprehension is also hurting her in math class, where she struggles to understand word problems, said her mother, Danyal Tidwell, who pins some blame on the pandemic. “We want to give her every resource we can between school and home, because we want her caught up,” Mrs. Tidwell said.</p> <p>For two years, schools and researchers have wrestled with pandemic-era learning setbacks resulting mostly from a lack of in-person classes. They are struggling to combat the learning loss, as well as to measure just how deep it is. Some answers to the second question are becoming clear. National data show that children</p> |

who were learning to read earlier in the pandemic have the lowest reading proficiency rates in about 20 years.

The U.S. Department of Education last Thursday [released data showing that from 2020 to 2022, average reading scores for 9-year-olds slid 5 points—to 215 out of a possible 500](#)—in the sharpest decline since 1990. Average math scores fell 7 points to 234, the first statistically significant decline in math scores since the long-term trend assessments began in the 1970s.

Learning loss generally is worse in districts that kept classes remote longer, with the effects most pronounced in high-poverty districts, researchers say. Yet reading scores are below 2019 levels for certain grades even in some states that quickly returned to in-person instruction, such as Florida.

Among possible reasons, educators say, are that some students stayed remote after in-person classes resumed, Covid-19 outbreaks led to additional quarantining and class routines were disturbed by practices such as social distancing.

While some students have begun to make up ground, researchers say that, on average, it could take five years or more for today's fourth-graders to read proficiently unless the pace accelerates. By then, [billions of dollars in federal pandemic-related aid for education](#) will have run out.

These students are at a pivotal stage. Educators pay particular attention to 9-year-olds' literacy rates because research shows that reading ability by the end of third grade can be predictive of educational success, career earnings and the risk of incarceration. A study released in 2011 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that 16% of students who don't read proficiently in third grade fail to graduate from high school on time, a rate four times that of proficient readers.

"If students are not reading at grade level, then what does it mean for the content they're taking in in their other subjects? Are they not as prepared to be able to participate in their math classes and their social studies classes?" said Karyn Lewis, director of the Center for School and Student Progress at NWEA, a nonprofit research firm that has studied how long it may take for proficiency rates on its tests to rebound.

State education leaders were acutely aware of the stakes well before Thursday's data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and are pumping billions of dollars into hoped-for solutions, from small-group tutoring to expanded summer school, and aiming to offer students more individual attention.

In some cases, the efforts coincide with incremental improvements for struggling students, but educators say they won't know for years whether their efforts are a match for a problem this big.

"Without any prior experience as a guide, practitioners are sort of winging it—providing tutors to some students, double-dose math and summer school to others—and then just hoping that it all adds up to enough," said Thomas Kane, an economist and professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

A concern, he said, is that districts might apply solutions and discover their inadequacy only after the federal aid is spent. The biggest pandemic relief program, the American Rescue Plan, earmarked \$122 billion for K-12 public schools and required that at least 20% go toward addressing learning loss. In many districts it should be close to 100%, in Prof. Kane's view.

State-level test results show reading scores still largely below prepandemic levels. In Indiana, the legislature last year approved a \$150 million grant program for organizations, such as the United Way, that are offering in-person programs with extended learning time.

Indiana also offers families up to \$1,000 to enroll in private tutoring. The program, largely bankrolled by federal aid, targets students who qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches and who were below proficiency in both English language arts and math in the third or fourth grade.

“We have to acknowledge that some of the things that we’re going to deploy in terms of initiatives are going to be very, very successful. Some might just help us stabilize. Some might not work as they were intended,” said Indiana Education Secretary Katie Jenner. The state has begun analyzing its return on investment, but that will take time, she said.

An office that North Carolina formed last year is leading efforts to assess learning-loss initiatives. The state’s Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration has found that a summer-school program that enrolled 250,000 students in 2021 had a small but positive impact on math and reading scores.

The office is working with a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill research center to launch studies of learning-loss programs, said Michael Maher, who heads the office. Despite the urgency to fund programs, “we still have to be mindful of how we’re going to spend this money,” Dr. Maher said.

Texas is a rare example of a state where young students’ reading scores have more than bounced back to prepandemic levels. In 2022, half of Texas third-graders met or exceeded expectations, up from 37% in 2021 and 43% in 2019, according to state data.

A key part of the learning-loss recovery effort in Texas is a measure passed by the legislature in 2021 that provides 30 hours of tutoring for students on the subject matter of each test where they failed to meet grade level.

Tennessee is among a handful of states that have taken aggressive action and managed to lift statewide results above 2021 levels, though still not back to scores before the pandemic for some subjects or grade levels. Tennessee’s spring 2022 assessment of English language arts scores for third-graders showed 36% were proficient, which was up from 32% in 2021 but still slightly behind the 37% in 2019.

State Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn calls the 2019 baseline unacceptably low. “We grew five to seven points, depending on the grade level, this year. That needs to happen every year for a number of years for our state to be where we know it can be,” she said. “We can’t have reading be less than a flip of a coin whether or not your child’s on grade level.”

One Tennessee effort involves instructing teachers in the science behind learning to read. More than 18,000 teachers have completed 60 hours of instruction, which includes strategies to help struggling readers.

In Nashville, fourth-grade teacher Makayla Walker is gearing up to start tutoring some of her students after school as part of Tennessee’s tutoring program, which began in the 2021-22 school year. Over three years, the program is expected to reach 150,000 students, underwritten by \$200 million in federal aid. The state is investing \$170 million in that program as well as a summer learning camp initiative created in response to the pandemic.

The tutoring is high-dosage, meaning students meet two or three times a week for 30 or 45 minutes, for at least a semester. The groups are small, three students per tutor in elementary school. The program is designed for students who are approaching proficiency and need a boost.

“I think it could make a world of difference,” Ms. Walker said. “Because I am their general education teacher, I already kind of have an idea of how they need support in here. So it will really allow me to build on that.”

Last school year the Nashville district tutored 745 third-graders in literacy and more than 3,000 students overall. The district said it is working with Brown University to study the effectiveness. Summer learning participants in 2021 showed slightly higher reading gains than students who didn’t take part, officials said.

Across Metro Nashville Public Schools, about 27% of third-graders tested proficient in English language arts on 2022 state assessments. That was a 5-point jump from 2021 and put the district near its 29% rate of 2019.

Assessment scores at Ms. Walker's school, Charlotte Park Elementary, where many students come from low-income families, are lower than the district's. Of the 16 children in her classroom on a recent day, just four or five read at grade level, she said. An added challenge: For 11 of her students, many of them Hispanic, English isn't their first language.

Even after students could return in person, many stayed remote, and others are still adjusting to being back in class, she said. That requires "more consistent redirection or reconnection with what we're doing, and I find that that is what's preventing some of them from attaining the skills that are missing," she said.

Ms. Walker, who uses a high-octane call-and-response method to engage her students, pulled three children aside on a recent day for extra reading instruction at a table in a corner of her classroom.

She had each child write the word "tap" and sound out each letter. Then she had them add "e" to make "tape." They repeated the exercise with "pin" and "pine."

"The 'e' is what?" she asked.

"Silent," replied one of the students.

Ms. Walker said she has no illusions she can erase huge learning gaps in one year. "But do I think that I can help them meet personal goals for themselves based on our testing? Yeah, I do," she said. "I think that it takes a partnership at this age with the kids. I think that they should be held accountable for their learning."

About 20 miles to the northwest, the Tidwells jumped at the chance for their daughter, Delainey, to work with a reading tutor this school year at East Cheatham Elementary, where many students are from poorer households.

Tutor Susan Collins greeted Delainey and two other fourth-grade girls for their first 45-minute session on a recent morning. They sat around a table in a conference room, beneath a framed print that read "be kind."

The school district in rural Cheatham County was an early adopter of the state's tutoring program, with math the focus last year. Third-graders' proficiency rate in English language arts was 40% in 2022, the highest in at least four years but still far too low, said Cathy Beck, the district's director of schools.

Mrs. Collins, a teacher with 32 years of experience and a warm manner, taught the three girls what "plethora" means, discussed prepositional phrases and shared stories about her own love of reading.

The girls took turns relating their reading challenges. Delainey spoke of her difficulty with comprehension. Riley Brooks said she wants to read faster. Olivia Hogan said she often skips a word or sentence, adding, "I think I can get better."

Mrs. Collins promised them they would all get better in the months to come.

"Not only are you going to learn everything there is about reading," she said, "you're going to learn everything I can teach you—in two days a week—about writing."

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Plan: shift to annual Covid shots like the flu |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-plans-shift-to-annual-covid-shots-as-new-boosters-roll-out-11662484424?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1 |

U.S. health authorities plan to recommend that people [get Covid-19 boosters](#) once a year, starting with [the new shots now rolling out](#), a shift from their current practice of issuing new advice every several months.

The annual cadence would be similar to that of flu shots, White House officials said Tuesday, though elderly people and those with weakened immune systems may need more frequent inoculations.

A shift to annual Covid-19 boosters would be a departure from current practice and comes after many people in the U.S. have ignored calls to get a first or second booster, partly due to fatigue with repeat inoculations.

“Barring any new variant curveball,” said White House coronavirus coordinator Ashish Jha, “for a large majority of Americans, we are moving to a point where a single annual Covid shot should provide a high degree of protection all year.”

To date, health authorities had recommended the extra doses based on the ebbs and flows of the virus’s evolution and new insights into people’s waning immunity. Yet the authorities wound up making recommendations for booster doses to different groups every several months.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended that older and immunocompromised people [get a first booster shot](#) in September 2021. Six months later, the agency urged those people [to get a second booster](#).

The steady stream of recommendations to different groups may have confused some people, White House officials acknowledged.

A third of all eligible people 50 years and older have gotten a second Covid-19 booster, according to a CDC study released last week. Roughly half of those who got the original two shots got a first booster, compared with 70% of Americans who have gotten the initial two doses, according to the CDC.

The changed approach comes as newly authorized boosters from [Pfizer Inc.](#) and its partner [BioNTech SE](#) and separately from [Moderna Inc.](#) roll out across the U.S., days after [the CDC recommended their use](#).

The new shots are [modified versions of the vaccines](#) in use since December 2020, targeting the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5 as well as the ancestral strain of the virus that is the focus of the original vaccines.

Next year, health agencies may decide to update the shots again based on what variants are circulating at the time, similar to the process for annual influenza shots, said Anthony Fauci, the White House’s chief medical adviser who also directs the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The new, updated vaccines should keep people out of the hospital in coming months if the Covid-19 virus continues to evolve in expected ways from the Omicron subvariant BA.5 that now predominates across the U.S., White House officials said.

Manufacturers began shipping updated booster doses last week to vaccination sites across the country, administration officials said. The federal government is working to make sure nursing homes and other facilities that serve groups at high risk for Covid-19 receive doses quickly, White House officials said.

Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said he expects appointments to be widely available in the next week or so.

Forecasts predict that 100,000 hospitalizations could be avoided if Americans get Covid-19 boosters at the same rate they get flu shots this fall, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky said.

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| | Pfizer, which began producing its retooled vaccine earlier this year, shipped the initial 100,000 doses upon last week's authorization to 62 locations in the U.S., a spokeswoman said. By Tuesday, Pfizer expected to deliver about three million doses among more than 3,300 sites. The drugmaker has the capacity to distribute up to 15 million doses by Friday. |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 First time travel tops pre-pandemic levels |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/labor-day-is-first-holiday-to-top-pre-pandemic-travel-levels-11662491960?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1 |
| GIST | <p>This Labor Day marked the first time that travel volume for a holiday weekend topped levels from before the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the Transportation Security Administration.</p> <p>The TSA said 8.76 million travelers went through its checkpoints between Friday, Sept. 2 and Monday, Sept. 5, compared with 8.62 million passengers over the long holiday weekend in 2019. Last Friday was the busiest travel day, with 2.48 million people passing through airport security.</p> <p>While more people have been taking to the skies again during the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic, air travel's recovery has been troubled, with this summer being one of the most chaotic travel seasons in decades. Many travelers have faced flight cancellations or delays, long lines at airports and lost luggage as airlines contend with labor shortages and schedule changes.</p> <p>Airline experts had recommended people flying over Labor Day weekend book nonstop flights and get to airports early to avoid potential headaches. But most travelers over the last long holiday of the summer fared pretty well, according to data from FlightAware. The flight-data provider said 0.6% of flights over the long weekend were canceled, while 16.6% of flights were delayed. Both measures were lower than they were during this year's July 4th and Memorial Day weekends.</p> <p>"The airlines really got it together," said FlightAware spokeswoman Kathleen Bangs, a former airline pilot. She added that airlines had good weather and had already pared back flight schedules.</p> <p>Following the summer disruptions, airlines and airports around the globe have extended passenger caps and cuts to flight schedules into the coming months.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Ukraine steep toll of Kherson offensive |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/07/ukraine-kherson-offensive-casualties-ammunition/ |
| GIST | <p>SOUTHERN UKRAINE — In dimly lit hospital rooms in southern Ukraine, soldiers with severed limbs, shrapnel wounds, mangled hands and shattered joints recounted the lopsided disadvantages their units faced in the early days of a new offensive to expel Russian forces from the strategic city of Kherson.</p> <p>The soldiers said they lacked the artillery needed to dislodge Russia's entrenched forces and described a yawning technology gap with their better-equipped adversaries. The interviews provided some of the first direct accounts of a push to retake captured territory that is so sensitive, Ukrainian military commanders have barred reporters from visiting the front lines.</p> <p>"They used everything on us," said Denys, a 33-year-old Ukrainian soldier whose unit fell back from a Russian-held village after a lengthy barrage of cluster bombs, phosphorous munitions and mortars. "Who can survive an attack for five hours like that?" he said.</p> <p>Denys and eight other Ukrainian soldiers from seven different units provided rare descriptions of the Kherson counteroffensive in the south, the most ambitious military operation by Kyiv since the expulsion of Russian forces at the perimeter of the capital in the spring. As in the battle for Kyiv, Ukraine's success is hardly assured and the soldiers' accounts signaled that a long fight, and many more casualties, lie ahead.</p> |

“We lost five people for every one they did,” said Ihor, a 30-year-old platoon commander who injured his back when the tank he was riding in crashed into a ditch.

Ihor had no military experience before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. He made a living selling animal feed to pig and cow farms. His replacement as platoon commander also has no previous military experience, he said.

The soldiers were interviewed on gurneys and wheelchairs as they recovered from injuries sustained in last week’s offensive. Some spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid disciplinary action. Others, like Denys and Ihor, agreed to reveal only their first names. But most spoke plainly about the disadvantages they faced.

Russia’s Orlan drones exposed Ukrainian positions from more than a kilometer above their heads, they said, an altitude that meant they never heard the buzz of the aircraft tracking their movements.

Russian tanks emerged from newly built cement fortifications to blast infantry with large-caliber artillery, the wounded Ukrainian soldiers said. The vehicles would then shrink back beneath the concrete shelters, shielded from mortar and rocket fire.

Counter-battery radar systems automatically detected and located Ukrainians who were targeting the Russians with projectiles, unleashing a barrage of artillery fire in response.

Russian hacking tools hijacked the drones of Ukrainian operators, who saw their aircraft drift away helplessly behind enemy lines.

Ukraine has discouraged coverage of the offensive, resulting in an information lag on a potentially pivotal inflection point in the nearly seven-month conflict.

When Ihor fired on Russian soldiers with his Kalashnikov rifle this week, he said, it was his first time shooting at a human being. “You don’t think about anything,” he said. “You understand, if you don’t do it, they will do it.”

Despite the challenges, Ihor said he is eager to return to the front line as soon as he heals. “My people are there. How can I leave them?” he said.

Other soldiers won’t be returning to the battlefield.

Oleksandr, a 28-year-old former construction worker, lost his arm in a mortar blast during the counteroffensive last week. He winced with phantom pain in his hospital bed on Sunday, saying he felt a sting from the fingers and hand that were no longer connected to his body.

Oleksandr said the Russian artillery fire was relentless. “They were just hitting us all the time,” he said. “If we fire three mortars, they fire 20 in return.”

The Ukrainian soldiers said they had to carefully ration their use of munitions but even when they did fire, they had trouble hitting targets. “When you give the coordinates, it’s supposed to be accurate but it’s not,” he said, noting that his equipment dated back to 1989.

Oleksandr had never traveled to Kherson before the war, but he said the goal of expelling Russian invaders was worth sacrificing a limb. “It’s our country,” he said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Ukraine’s forces retook two villages in the Kherson region, and one of his aides posted an image of the Ukrainian flag being hoisted over the village of Vysokopillya over the weekend.

“Ukrainian flags are returning to the places where they should be,” Zelensky said in a video address. But it was impossible to gauge what progress Ukrainian forces have made in their push to expel the Russian invaders from Kherson.

The region, which was captured by Russia earlier in the war forms a crucial part of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s coveted “land bridge” to Crimea, the peninsula that Russia invaded and annexed in violation of international law in 2014.

However bloody the fight, the Ukrainian soldiers said they saw no alternative.

“If we don’t stop them, they’re going to just rape and murder our people like they did everywhere else,” said Oleksandr’s roommate in the hospital, a 49-year-old conscripted soldier who asked to be called by his nickname, “Pinochet.”

Pinochet said his knee was shattered by shrapnel from a mortar that was fired after a drone spotted him in last week’s counteroffensive. He said that while Ukrainian casualties are significant, the side that wages an offensive always loses more soldiers.

“There’s nothing we can do about it,” Pinochet said. “And we can still win.”

Russian electronic warfare also posed a constant threat. Soldiers described ending their shifts and turning on their phones to call or text family members — a decision that immediately drew Russian artillery fire.

“When we turn on mobile phones or radio, they can recognize our presence immediately,” said Denys. “And then the shooting starts.”

Despite the ban on media visits to the front line, there were signs that Russia’s grip on Kherson might be loosening.

In a statement on Monday, a Kremlin-backed occupation authority said that plans for a staged referendum in the Kherson region, a precursor to Russian annexation, were put on hold due to security issues. The Russian statement was later walked back, but it gave the Ukrainians optimism and suggested that, at the least, the counteroffensive was causing some disarray for the Russians.

Kyiv is hoping that the Kherson counteroffensive will boost national morale and demonstrate to Western governments that their billions of dollars in economic and military assistance is paying off, even as sanctions against Russia have raised energy prices and inflation and raised fears of an even more expensive winter.

The Ukrainian claims of retaking villages such as Vysokopillya could not be confirmed, though soldiers interviewed said they were able to advance into some previously Russian-controlled villages. Those soldiers declined to name the villages, citing instructions from their superiors.

A group of Washington Post journalists who traveled within three miles of Vysokopillya, in northern Kherson, on Monday were prevented from entering the village by Ukrainian troops and could not ascertain its status. A local official said Ukrainian and Russian forces were still battling for control.

A clear picture of Ukraine’s losses could not be independently assessed.

Denys, sitting upright on his hospital bed, said almost every member of his 120-person unit was injured, though only two were killed.

A 25-year-old soldier being treated for shrapnel wounds said that, within his unit of 100 soldiers, seven were killed and 20 injured. Ihor, the platoon commander, said 16 of the 32 men under his command were injured and one was killed.

Ukraine's injured soldiers have been spread out to different hospitals across southern Ukraine to free up the main medical facilities near the Kherson region for incoming patients.

The Post is withholding the names of hospitals treating soldiers because such medical facilities have been targeted by Russian forces through the course of the war.

On Sunday, a hospital in Mykolaiv, a city near Kherson, came under Russian shelling. The facility's pediatric clinic was so badly damaged it was no longer functional.

When it comes to casualties, Rob Lee, a military analyst at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said Ukraine must make sure it retains a fighting force large enough to fend off Russian advances in the east, given Moscow's far larger armed forces.

"If they're taking heavy casualties and it continues for a long period of time, it can be a problem," Lee said.

Ukraine's reliance on inexperienced soldiers is also a vulnerability but not one that is exclusive to its forces.

At the start of the conflict, Russia and Ukraine fought with professional military units. After suffering heavy losses in the eastern Donbas region, each side began deploying volunteer or reservist units with less experience.

The Kherson counteroffensive is now testing Ukraine's forces in new ways, Lee said.

Ukrainian soldiers who faced off with Russians over the last few months gained new battlefield acumen "but much of that experience likely involved holding defensive positions," he said. "Conducting offensive operations is far more difficult, and it takes time and training."

The flurry of action at the hospitals made clear the soldiers weren't in the fight alone. Doctors, nurses and hospital staff worked around-the-clock to provide care for the large influx of wounded troops. One nurse snuck a kitten into the trauma unit for a soldier named Oleh, who rescued the feline from the front lines after its mother was killed by shrapnel.

Volunteers brought toiletries, including toothbrushes and deodorant, and bags of new clothes for the soldiers to wear after physicians used scissors to cut through their shirts and pants to expose their wounds.

Each soldier said it was impossible to predict when Kherson might be liberated, and many said it would depend on when the Ukrainians receive enough artillery from allies.

When one soldier appeared uncertain if the counteroffensive would be worth the toll it has taken, Oleksandr, who has cultivated a reputation as the "hospital comedian," said it was important to maintain a positive attitude.

"You have to make jokes to keep your spirits up. We can have this outlook because we're Ukrainians," he said. "We're kind if you don't touch us."

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Eatonville SD cancels classes due to strike |
| SOURCE | https://www.q13fox.com/news/first-day-of-classes-canceled-in-eatonville-school-district-due-to-teacher-strike |
| GIST | EATONVILLE, Wash. - The first day of classes in the Eatonville School District has been canceled as teachers voted to strike. The Eatonville School District and the Eatonville Education Association (EEA) have not yet reached an agreement , after bargaining on Sept. 6. |

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| | <p>EEA will begin their strike on Sept. 7, which would have been the first day of classes. School will be closed for the remainder of the teacher strike.</p> <p>"Please know reaching an agreement is our highest priority. We appreciate your patience and understanding during this difficult time and look forward to welcoming our students and staff back to school as soon as possible," the district said.</p> <p>FOX 13 has reached out to EEA for comment.</p> <p>Seattle Public Schools will also have no classes on Wednesday as their teacher's union also voted to strike.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 UN: need nuclear plant demilitarized zone |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/07/world/ukraine-russia-war#top-un-officials-say-neither-country-should-have-a-military-presence-at-the-zaporizhzhia-nuclear-plant |
| GIST | <p>At an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday, top officials called for an immediate agreement on a demilitarized perimeter around a Russian-occupied nuclear plant in southern Ukraine and for neither country's military to occupy the facility where fighting has prompted international fears of a disaster.</p> <p>Russian forces, which have occupied the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant since shortly after the invasion, should withdraw from the facility and Ukraine's army should commit to not entering the plant, U.N. officials said.</p> <p>António Guterres, the United Nations secretary general, said that, as a first step, Russia and Ukraine must stop all military activity that targets the nuclear site as well as attacks launched from its vicinity.</p> <p>Any damage to the plant — Europe's largest — "could spell catastrophe, not only for the immediate vicinity, but for the region and beyond," Mr. Guterres told the council.</p> <p>The council received the report of the U.N.'s atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, after a team of its inspectors gained access to the site last week for the first time since the conflict began. The report laid out a number of recommendations that included establishing a special safety zone and allowing the Ukrainian workers who are still running the plant to operate without pressure.</p> <p>After its inspection, the I.A.E.A. left some inspectors behind to maintain a presence at the plant. Some diplomats, including China's representative, said they had hoped the presence of U.N. inspectors would bring the fighting to a halt.</p> <p>Violence, including shelling that has landed near reactors, has continued around the plant for weeks. On Monday, it caused a fire that led to the plant being disconnected from Ukraine's national power grid.</p> <p>"The hits that this facility has received, and that I could personally see and assess together with my experts, is simply unacceptable," Rafael Mariano Grossi, the I.A.E.A. chief who led the team, told the council. "We are playing with fire and something very, very catastrophic could take place."</p> <p>Mr. Grossi said he planned to contact both sides soon to propose concrete steps to begin demilitarizing the area.</p> <p>Each country has blamed the other for the shelling, and the I.A.E.A.'s report did not address the origin of the artillery shells that have targeted the area around the plant.</p> <p>Vasily Nebenzya, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, repeated his country's stance that the only threat to the plant came from the Ukrainian forces and criticized the I.A.E.A. report for not naming the</p> |

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| | <p>source of the shelling. Mr. Nebenzya said that Ukrainian forces had also attempted to attack the plant with drones over the weekend but that Russia's military thwarted the attacks.</p> <p>Ukraine's ambassador, Sergiy Kyslytsya, said his country was ready to engage with the I.A.E.A. on a continued presence at the plant. Ukraine needed to study Mr. Grossi's proposal for a demilitarized zone but would support a plan calling for withdrawal of the Russian military from the plant, he said.</p> <p>Jeffrey DeLaurentis, a senior political affairs expert representing the United States, said Russia must allow the U.N. inspectors and Ukrainian operators to implement the recommendations of the I.A.E.A. report. He reiterated the calls to demilitarize the area.</p> <p>"There is no excuse for the unnecessary risk of a nuclear incident," Mr. DeLaurentis said. "No one should be questioning if there will be a tomorrow."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 US will not designate Russia terror sponsor |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/07/world/ukraine-russia-war#biden-will-not-designate-russia-a-state-sponsor-of-terrorism |
| GIST | <p>President Biden will not designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism, despite pleas from Ukraine's government that he do so, because such an action could set back humanitarian efforts and potential peace negotiations, the White House said on Tuesday.</p> <p>"This designation could have unintended consequences to Ukraine and the world," Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, told reporters in a daily briefing. She spoke a day after Mr. Biden, in response to a reporter's question, said that he would not add Russia to America's list of terrorism sponsors.</p> <p>Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, the country's parliament and other senior officials have urged the Biden administration to do so, a move that would trigger harsh new U.S. sanctions and place Russia in an official category currently occupied by only Iran, North Korea and Cuba.</p> <p>Top Biden administration officials, including Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, have expressed skepticism about the idea for months. Russian officials have suggested that the action, which its supporters say is warranted by Russia's brutal military tactics in civilian areas of Ukraine, would rupture what remains of U.S.-Russian relations.</p> <p>Ms. Jean-Pierre said the move could jeopardize the Western delivery of humanitarian assistance to some areas of Ukraine, and might complicate an agreement with Russia to ensure that food supplies can be shipped from once-blockaded Ukrainian ports.</p> <p>"It would also undercut our unprecedented multilateral condition that has been so effective at holding Putin accountable," she added, referring to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, "and could also undermine our ability to support Ukraine at the negotiation table."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Earl intensifies into 2nd hurricane of season |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/article/tropical-storm-earl-hurricane.html |
| GIST | <p>Tropical Storm Earl intensified into the second hurricane of the 2022 Atlantic season on Tuesday evening as it churned north toward Bermuda, where a tropical storm watch had been issued.</p> <p>The storm is forecast to build into a major hurricane by Thursday night, the National Hurricane Center said.</p> <p>The storm was about 550 miles south of Bermuda and was expected to gradually turn to the north-northeast on Thursday. That track would have the storm passing to the southeast of the island by Thursday evening.</p> |

As of 11 p.m. Eastern time on Tuesday, the storm was moving north at around seven miles per hour, with maximum sustained winds of around 80 miles per hour with higher gusts. A tropical storm reaches hurricane strength when its maximum sustained winds are at least 74 miles per hour.

Storm conditions were possible on Bermuda beginning on Thursday afternoon. Earl's hurricane-force winds were extending outward to 40 miles, with tropical-storm-force winds extending 115 miles, the Hurricane Center said.

The Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June to November, [has had a relatively quiet start](#), with only three named storms before last week. There were no named storms in the Atlantic during August, the first time that has happened since 1997.

In addition to Earl, [Hurricane Danielle has been meandering](#) across the central North Atlantic.

In the Pacific, [Typhoon Hinnamnor](#) brought heavy rain and strong winds to South Korea on Tuesday, leaving severe, if isolated, flooding and damage in its wake. And [Tropical Storm Kay](#), off southwestern Mexico, was expected to strengthen this week as it approached Baja California.

In early August, scientists at NOAA [issued an updated forecast](#) for the rest of the season, which still predicted an above-normal level of activity. In it, they said that the season — which runs through Nov. 30 — could see 14 to 20 named storms, with six to 10 turning into hurricanes with sustained winds of at least 74 m.p.h. Three to five of those could strengthen into what NOAA calls major hurricanes — Category 3 or stronger — with winds of at least 111 m.p.h.

Last year, there were 21 named storms, after [a record-breaking 30 in 2020](#). For the past two years, meteorologists have exhausted the list of names used to identify storms during the Atlantic hurricane season, an occurrence that has happened only one other time, in 2005.

The links between hurricanes and climate change have become clearer with each passing year. Data shows that [hurricanes have become stronger worldwide](#) during the past four decades. Over time, a warming planet can expect stronger hurricanes and a higher incidence of the most powerful storms — though the overall number of storms could drop, because factors like stronger wind shear could keep weaker storms from forming.

Hurricanes are also becoming wetter because of more water vapor in the warmer atmosphere; scientists have suggested storms like [Hurricane Harvey in 2017](#) produced far more rain than they would have without the human effects on climate. Also, rising sea levels are contributing to higher storm surge — the most destructive element of tropical cyclones.

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| HEADLINE | 09/07 How will Ukraine rebuild? Who pays? |
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| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/07/world/europe/how-will-ukraine-rebuild-and-who-should-pay.html |
| GIST | <p>BRUSSELS — Even as Russia's war on Ukraine grinds on with no end in sight, Ukraine's allies are facing complicated questions about the country's reconstruction.</p> <p>Who will pay for what, and who should control the process and funds? What kind of external oversight of the money should be required and what changes must Ukraine make?</p> <p>An international conference on reconstruction is scheduled for next month in Berlin to grapple with those thorny issues, and also determine whether reconstruction should begin before a peace settlement. There is also the vexed question of what kind of security guarantees should be offered to encourage private investment in the rebuilding.</p> |

To that end, the German government has asked a research institution it helps finance, the Washington-based German Marshall Fund, to come up with proposals for donor countries. Their report was provided to The New York Times and is already being discussed among donor countries as “a private note to stakeholders.”

Among the key recommendations are that the Group of 7 industrialized nations appoint a Ukraine coordinator to oversee reconstruction, ideally an American with global stature; that existing institutions be used for the project to ensure timeliness; and that different multilateral financial institutions should be used, to limit the influence of Russian or Chinese board members. The report also says that Ukraine must accept strict oversight of the funds, as well as strengthening its legal and judicial systems, to reduce the potential for corruption.

“The vision of a free and democratic, modernized and European Ukraine is the answer” to Russian aggression, the report says.

In June, at an international conference in Lugano, Ukraine presented its own [national recovery plan](#). But its democratic allies have not responded in kind, with the Berlin conference already postponed a month until late October.

This report tries to fill the void and deal with the main challenges. First, how to keep Ukraine afloat, given that it needs some \$5 billion to \$6 billion a month to finance the government, according to the International Monetary Fund. “Reconstruction won’t be possible with a collapsing, failed state,” said Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, Berlin director of the German Marshall Fund and one of the authors. Donors need reassurance to keep pouring large sums of taxpayer money into a state that has a reputation for corruption.

That leverage will push Ukraine to overhaul its institutions and courts if it wants a rapid integration into Europe, the report says, along with the help of the European Union, which has high legal standards and has offered the country candidate status.

“We will also need very solid donor oversight, and Ukraine must understand that,” Mr. Kleine-Brockhoff said. Ukraine would need to appoint an independent inspector-general with real teeth and join [the European Public Prosecutor’s Office](#), designed to investigate fraudulent use of E.U. funds. Foreign aid of this size will require foreign oversight, which Ukraine must accept, the report says.

Another challenge is whether to create new institutions for the massive reconstruction project; the report suggests that is unnecessary and would waste time. Funding should be phased with the progress of the war and any eventual peace, moving from relief and reconstruction to modernization and eventual accession to the European Union.

Non-European donors from the Group of 7 would front-load aid, with the European Union gradually becoming the predominant donor as international interest fades. The United States would continue to be the largest contributor to Ukraine’s security, while other countries would invest more in recovery and modernization.

The report envisages a total of some \$100 billion over time to rebuild Ukraine’s infrastructure, far less than the \$750 billion over 10 years that Ukraine cites, but in line [with a study from the Kyiv School of Economics](#), which in late August estimated the cost of damage at that point at \$113.5 billion.

But much of that money would have to come as grants or extremely long-term loans, given the financial pressures on the Ukrainian government. Those are decisions that European countries must make soon, the report says, because other countries are likely to condition and scale their own contributions on what Brussels gives.

Some suggest the European Union should come up with more collective debt to fund Ukraine’s reconstruction, but large countries will object to that, especially given current demands from high inflation

and energy costs. One senior European minister, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic, ruled out the use of new collective debt, saying he had to take care of his own people first. Ukraine deserves and will receive financial help, but any new funds raised in that way should be used for E.U. countries, he said.

Some countries, like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia, have also suggested confiscating the \$300 billion of Russian Central Bank assets frozen in the West to rebuild Ukraine, and in June, the Group of 7 [committed to exploring their use](#). But the report regards that as unrealistic in the short term, possibly illegal and hard to get through the courts. Instead, the authors suggest, as part of any settlement, that Russia be asked to provide a percentage of those assets for Ukraine in return for getting the bulk of them back.

“Obviously that depends on the outcome of the war,” Mr. Kleine-Brockhoff said. But Ukraine has immediate financial and military needs that must also be met.

Beginning serious reconstruction while the war continues is a difficult task, and it would only be after some sort of settlement and some special “war insurance” arrangements, backed by states, that Ukraine could expect to attract much private investment, Mr. Kleine-Brockhoff said. “Without peace and security Ukraine would need ever more grants and that becomes unrealistic,” he said.

Another author of the report, the economist Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, added: “Of course there is uncertainty about when the war ends and how, but there will be a sizable bill for Ukrainian reconstruction and there is an urgent need for that not to linger.”

There is inevitable reluctance from big countries like Germany and France, facing their own domestic economic challenges, he said. “But we can’t allow this to linger, so we need to think hard about how Europe pays for the vast majority of it. And we have to ensure that there is a clear trans-Atlantic aspect and an inclusive framework that includes the G7 and others,” like the Turks and even the Chinese.

“A Ukraine that isn’t quickly rebuilt can’t enter accession negotiations with the E.U. and can’t be a viable state,” Mr. Kirkegaard said. “No one wants Ukraine to be a failed state.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Rents drop but trend may not hold |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/6/rents-are-starting-to-come-down-but-the-trend-may-/ |
| GIST | <p>NEW YORK — Rents are starting to come down after spiking to record levels this past summer, but experts are uncertain if the slowdown will continue.</p> <p>Christopher Mayer, professor of real estate at Columbia Business School, said people looking for an apartment now might have a better experience than they did in May or June.</p> <p>“We’re not seeing rents go up as quickly, the rental market is softening a little bit,” he said.</p> <p>The national median asking rent was up 14% in July over July the previous year, the smallest annual increase since November 2021, according to a new report from Redfin. While that percentage is still high, it has decreased from 15% in June and 16% in May.</p> <p>Experts say the market could slow further toward the end of the year, but there’s still a lot of uncertainty.</p> <p>“I would not be surprised if we get to 2023 before things really get back to normal,” said Brian Carberry, senior managing editor of Rent.com, an apartment search website owned by Redfin.</p> <p>Much depends on where you live. Cities in Florida such as Boca Raton and West Palm Beach have seen rents decrease -0.1% and -0.5% respectively compared to last month. But according to Apartment List, rents in California coastal cities such as San Diego have continued to increase over the past year.</p> |

In Rochester, N.Y., rent was up 15.3% in August over the same month the previous year, according to data from Apartment List. An average two-bedroom apartment in the Rochester area was \$1,318 in August, compared with \$1,116 a year ago.

Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan said high rents are a concern because they can account for a big chunk of a household's take-home pay.

"Gas prices are coming back down, but rents are going up 10, 12, 15%. And rent can end up taking 40% of these households' income," Moynihan said in a recent Associated Press interview.

While things are looking a bit better for renters than a few months ago, it's still a landlords' market, Mayer said.

If your lease is up, staying put and negotiating with your landlord might be a better option than trying to move, at least until the rental market slows down further, said Paula Munger, assistant vice president for industry research and analysis at the National Apartment Association.

"When you renew your lease, you're definitely not paying the same as someone new moving in," Munger said. "If you can, stay in your apartment."

A major reason for rent spikes has been increasing demand from people priced out of a booming housing market. That market is starting to slow, which could mean more people can afford to buy and won't need to rent, but with interest rates rising, some may not want to take on mortgages.

"With inflation now all throughout the market, there's not enough supply so the prices are going up," Munger said. "That's the downside for people, just not having enough options and choices for what they would like in a housing unit."

That was the experience of Erika Tascon, a 22-year-old Los Angeles resident who was living with roommates but wanted to find an apartment with her boyfriend.

After visiting more than 10 units, the couple picked a 500-square-foot one-bedroom apartment in Beverly Hills where they pay \$2,750 per month. The median rent for a one-bedroom in the area is \$2,773, up 14% from last year, according to data from Zumper.

"I think landlords are taking advantage of tenants right now," said Tascon, who is paying \$200 more per month than for her previous apartment.

In Britni Eseller's case, the high demand meant that she had to rush to fill out her application to beat the other 10 people who toured the apartment she wanted.

"Because everyone is in scarcity mode, you're willing to find a place that might be somewhat affordable and you're unfortunately okay with overlooking chipped floors or a broken appliance," said Eseller, who lives in North Park, a neighborhood of San Diego.

Developers have ramped up construction of apartment buildings this year, which could eventually help to ease the crunch. But it's likely to take a while before that's reflected in the market.

Meanwhile, high rents are disproportionately hurting low-income residents across the country, said Ben Martin, research director of Texas Housers, a non-profit organization that works on housing justice.

In May, rental prices in Dallas and Fort Worth were up 21.6% from last year, according to Redfin data. In Austin they were up 48.4%. One major reason is that high-income people from coastal areas like California and New York moved to Texas during the coronavirus pandemic, when they realized they could

work remotely and live more cheaply. In December of last year, for example, Tesla moved its headquarters from Silicon Valley to Austin.

“People who make the lowest incomes are paying more of their total pie of money,” Martin said. “Which means that they don’t have money for anything else: school supplies, groceries, gas, clothing, all of the essential stuff that you need to live.”

In addition to cutting basic expenses, renters are also cramming more people into apartments, Martin said.

Increasingly, people can’t afford their homes at all and are now facing eviction. Governments have ended eviction moratoriums and rental assistance programs that allowed people to stay in their homes during the pandemic.

The Eviction Lab, a research organization at Princeton University, is seeing record numbers of evictions that have surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

In Houston, where the eviction moratorium ended in July 2021, there were 7,242 eviction filings in July of this year, 51% above average, according to The Eviction Lab. Other cities such as Los Angeles have extended eviction moratoriums until the end of this year.

Tenants who can’t afford rent increases but also can’t afford to move are often forced to choose between paying rent and covering basic necessities. An eviction stays on a renter’s record, making it harder to find housing in the future.

“The threat of eviction is the looming problem,” said Nick Graetz, a postdoctoral research associate at The Eviction Lab. “Part of the reason renters sacrifice so many other things to try to pay unreasonable high rents every month is because of the constant threat of being evicted from their home.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Airlines eye business travelers for recovery |
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| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/6/airlines-count-on-business-travelers-to-keep-recov/ |
| GIST | <p>DALLAS — With summer vacations winding down, airlines are counting on the return of more business travelers to keep their pandemic recovery going into the fall.</p> <p>Air travel in the United States, bolstered by huge numbers of tourists, has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>Inflation - and especially this year’s sharp rise in airfares - raises concern about how long vacationers can afford to keep flying at their current pace. Airlines say they see no signs of a slowdown in leisure travel.</p> <p>Business travel, however, remains about 25% to 30% below 2019 levels, according to airlines and outfits that track sales.</p> <p>And it is not clear when - or if - road warriors will return to their old travel habits.</p> <p>“The whole challenge for the industry is around the return of the corporate traveler, and whether he is going to come back in enough volume and frequency that is going to help these airlines,” says John Grant, an analyst with travel-data provider OAG.</p> <p>The Global Business Travel Association recently predicted that corporate travel won’t fully return until mid-2026, 18 months later than the trade group had previously forecast.</p> <p>Business travelers generally pay higher fares, so their absence has an outsized impact on airline revenue and profit.</p> |

Business travel is slower to return because it is more complicated than somebody deciding they want to take a vacation after staying home during the first two years of the pandemic, says Chuck Thackston, who leads data research at the Airlines Reporting Corp., a ticket-settlement firm that operates as a middleman between airlines and travel agents.

“On the corporate side, it just takes a little more to restart that because there are so many moving parts,” Thackston said. “If you want to go visit clients in New York, it could be that nobody is in the office in New York. That is slowly building back.”

Conventions and other big meetings are another key driver of business travel, and also seem to be coming back, Thackston said.

Airline officials say that travel by small-business operators has recovered nearly fully, but that many corporate travelers have not returned to the road or skies.

The chief commercial officer of Southwest Airlines, Andrew Watterson, said that since business travel began picking up this spring, “it was skewed toward smaller businesses and government and education were traveling. Our largest corporates are the ones that are lagging, particularly banking, consulting and technology.”

Watterson said that among Southwest’s biggest corporate accounts, they all have employees traveling - but not as many of them, and not as often.

The nature of business travel is changing as companies become accustomed to smaller travel budgets. Some trips are being replaced by video calls, perhaps permanently. Speculative sales trips could be especially easy for companies to cut.

Conventions now routinely offer a “hybrid” format with an option to stay behind and watch online - although that means missing the hallway conversations and other opportunities to network.

Standard & Poor’s said this week that many convention center operators are running summer and fall schedules similar to those in 2019, but a recession or new COVID-19 variant are still risks.

Vasu Raja, the chief commercial officer at American Airlines, said demand has dropped for one-day business trips in which someone leaves in the morning and flies home that evening.

“But interestingly, we’ve seen more demand for blended trips where somebody leaves on a Thursday from Dallas to go to New York, they don’t return on the Friday - they stay through the weekend and they come back on Sunday,” he said. Sometimes a spouse goes with them, he added.

Business travel is big business worldwide. The Global Business Travel Association estimates that it was worth more than \$1.4 trillion in 2019, then plummeted by more than half each of the next two years. The trade group estimates that after being hindered by the omicron variant early this year, business travel will hit \$933 billion in 2022 - still 35% below the pre-pandemic mark.

The widespread availability of vaccines and better treatment of COVID-19 - along with relaxation of mandatory quarantines and other travel restrictions - have boosted leisure and corporate travel. However, travel is now threatened by deteriorating economic conditions including surging inflation and labor shortages. New COVID-19 variants remain a concern among travel managers, particularly in Asia.

The cost of travel is expected to keep rising, putting pressure on corporate budgets. A recent report from travel-management company CWT predicted that fares paid by business travelers will rise nearly 50% this year and 8% next year, and hotel rates will rise 19% this year and 8% in 2023.

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| | <p>Most U.S. airlines reported profits for the April-through-June second quarter. For American and United, it was their first profitable quarter excluding government aid since the pandemic started, and they should be in the black for the third quarter, which ends with vacation-heavy July and August.</p> <p>Business travel traditionally enjoys a peak in the spring and another in September and October. Airlines are about to find out whether that happens this year.</p> <p>“There has been a lot of discussion about, yeah, business travel is coming back, and U.S. airline CEOs being quite bullish about it,” said Grant, the OAG analyst. “But the hard evidence now needs to come forward.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Seattle schools, teachers still deadlocked |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/classes-canceled-as-seattle-schools-teachers-remain-deadlocked-into-night/ |
| GIST | <p>Seattle educators negotiated into the night Tuesday, hoping to come to a last-minute deal to avert a teacher’s strike in the state’s largest school district. With so much uncertainty, district officials canceled classes on what would have been the first school day of the year.</p> <p>Teachers have been negotiating with the district for months, with leadership mainly focused on pay increases and support for special education and multilingual students. Seattle may join Kent as the only other major school district in Washington on strike at the start of this school year.</p> <p>Seattle Public Schools announced later Tuesday afternoon that classes would be postponed “until further notice because of a planned work stoppage by the Seattle educators’ union.” Parents said they were scrambling for last-minute child care.</p> <p>Between coronavirus outbreaks, spotty school-bus service and staffing shortages, the strike is one more in a long line of school disruptions that have become commonplace since the start of the pandemic, all of which pose the biggest hardship for working class families.</p> <p>There was overwhelming support for a strike from the Seattle Education Association, which announced Tuesday that 95% of its members who voted over the weekend were in favor. SEA President Jennifer Matter said 75% of the union’s roughly 6,000 members voted.</p> <p>Demands from SEA include maintaining staff ratios for disabled and multilingual students as the district aims to provide more services in general education classrooms, and ensuring the district provides them with interpretation and translation services in meetings with parents and on official documents.</p> <p>The district, which has an enrollment of about 50,000 students, is offering a package of pay increases for SEA members, as well as substitutes.</p> <p>During a video meeting announcing the authorization to strike, a representative from the bargaining team said they were “prepared to stay all night” in search of an agreement.</p> <p>On social media, parents expressed concerns about finding child care. Others said they’re frustrated by the “last-minute” negotiations, and the possibility a strike could extend into the school year.</p> <p>Michelle Kim Neubaue is a parent of a kindergartner and second grader, and said she supports the teachers, but is “furious” with the district’s communication.</p> <p>“My biggest frustration with the district is how they communicate what’s happening ... they also point to disagreements around the [special education] and language access programming, which horribly stigmatizes children and families that access those resources,” said Neubaue, via a direct message on Twitter.</p> |

The district said that meals would still be available Wednesday for students to pick up between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. at several school sites, and with additional information on its family resources page.

On Tuesday afternoon, about 100 teachers in red union shirts gathered outside John Stanford Center, the district's headquarters. Their mood was upbeat.

Union President Jennifer Matter said to the crowd of educators that school could start Thursday if district negotiators listened to the union's demands.

Both management and labor named special education as their major sticking point. But that explanation doesn't square with past progress on this issue, said Samantha Fogg, who co-chairs the citywide parent-teacher organization, Seattle Council PTSA.

The most recent contract called for the creation of a special education task force containing district employees, union members and parents. For more than a year, the task force discussed ways to increase the amount of time that disabled children spend in typical classroom settings, which research shows improves academic and social outcomes for all kids. Washington state has among the worst rates of inclusion in the nation for disabled kids.

In May, the task force — which included Uti Hawkins, the union's vice president, and Rocky Torres, who oversees special education for SPS — signed off on a set of recommendations that would guide bargaining.

They call for a phased pilot program that would introduce what's called a "co-teaching model" to a select group of schools, a major redesign. In co-teaching, a general education and special education instructor would share a classroom, reducing the need for disabled students to be segregated in a different room.

And, concerning to educators, they suggested a move away from staffing ratios that cap the number of students assigned to each teacher for special education services. Instead, staffing would be determined by the needs of students. For example, two students may have dyslexia, but one may require more specialized attention than the other.

This change could make it easier for students to get additional support from staff members if it becomes necessary. But the absence of set staffing ratios, union leaders told members, could open the door to unmanageable caseloads and wouldn't guarantee adequate staffing.

This tension arose because there is so much distrust on both sides, said Cherylynn Crowther, president of Seattle Special Education PTSA. And it comes at a time when the district is projecting budget cuts as it spends down its one-time pandemic relief funds.

Manuela Slye, who represented Seattle Council PTSA on the task force, said she is still confused about why these issues didn't come up earlier. The group disbanded amicably this past spring, congratulating each other on the work they did together.

"From my perspective, adult issues are getting in the way of centering students," said Slye.

At Tuesday's rally, Carrie Syvertsen talked about what it's like to be the only social worker at Robert Eagle Staff Middle School, which has about 700 students. The National Association of Social Workers recommends 1 social worker for every 250 students.

Syvertsen has an active weekly caseload as well as drop-in hours for students in crisis. She often finds herself helping students overcome barriers and explaining students' mental health needs to teachers.

While she works with counselors at the Seattle middle school to somewhat split up the work, mental health support staffing isn't close to where it should be, she said.

“I’m really worried about staff retention and burnout,” Syvertsen said. “The district has not committed to making sure caseloads and workloads are manageable. It’s not sustainable.”

Negotiations between the SEA and Seattle school district included advocating for student-to-social-worker ratio cap and more mental health support staff, said Matter on Monday.

Making sure case loads remain manageable means giving each student the support they deserve, she said.

Increases in educator pay were also up for negotiation. The union want the district to increase wages above the state-funded 5.5% cost of living adjustment, although Matter did not share specific dollar figures.

Since 2015 — the last time Seattle teachers went on strike — pay has gone up significantly, in part due to a school funding saga known as the McCleary decision. That state Supreme Court case forced lawmakers to pour billions of dollars into Washington’s K-12 school system, most of it going to salaries for teachers and other staff. Before McCleary, much of that pay had been funded by local school district property-tax levies; the justices said the state needed to cover the full cost.

In 2018, educators and the Seattle district signed a one-year contract that resulted in 10.5% raises. And in 2019, the Seattle union reached a three-year agreement that gave an 11.1% increase for teachers over three years, and 12.1% for classified employees, such as instructional assistants. Under the current contract, which expired last month, teachers make between \$63,000 and \$124,000, depending on their level of experience.

“We’re not asking for the moon,” Matter said. “We recognize we have to put forth proposals that work within the district’s budget. Everything that we put in, we know the district can afford.”

She and other union members said that raising wages across the board for office professionals, paraprofessionals, other classified employees and substitute teachers are a priority.

Tuesday also marked the eighth day of missed classes in the Kent School District strike, which has an enrollment of about 25,000 students. The school year was slated to begin on Thursday, Aug. 25. Kent Education Association members and district officials met on Monday, the Labor Day holiday, and returned to the bargaining table on Tuesday.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Union of Washington, representing Kent’s custodians, maintenance workers and other employees, also voted over the weekend to strike against the district if the terms of their contract cannot be met, according to the Kent Reporter. AFT bargaining will begin next week.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 NTSB: floatplane wreckage not yet located |
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| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/whidbey-island-plane-crash-wreckage-not-yet-located-ntsb-says/ |
| GIST | <p>Mukilteo — Officials have not yet located wreckage from the floatplane that crashed Sunday into Mutiny Bay off Whidbey Island, killing all 10 people aboard, according to the National Transportation Safety Board.</p> <p>Tom Chapman, one of four NTSB members, told reporters Tuesday evening that while officials are reviewing maintenance records, weather conditions and other data points related to the crash, they hadn’t located enough wreckage to investigate the cause.</p> <p>“We feel confident that the wreckage will be located, but at this point that effort is still underway,” Chapman said, more than 50 hours after the incident.</p> |

He said the crash was “an unusual situation under any circumstances” and that a lack of similar incidents makes it hard to determine a timeline for the recovery of the wreckage.

The impact, current and depth of water in the assumed crash site have complicated search efforts by the NTSB, U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies since Sunday.

Difficulty locating the wreckage could prolong the investigation.

“That makes it a little more unpredictable,” Chapman said. “Those efforts are ongoing. It’s hard to predict how long it’s going to take.”

Active search and rescue efforts were called off Monday as the NTSB took over the investigation and recovery efforts.

Investigations into such crashes often take 12 to 18 months, Chapman said.

Six NTSB investigators have been working with the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission since Monday to find the plane. Officials are using sonar and divers to attempt to locate remnants of the aircraft.

It’s unclear whether the wreckage is concentrated in one area or if it’s in smaller pieces that may have dispersed. Only one of 10 people on board has been accounted for.

All are presumed dead, according to Chapman.

Chapman said the agency hasn’t determined the cause of the crash and will not “speculate” about what caused the plane to plunge into the Puget Sound.

He confirmed witness reports that the plane likely entered the water nose first, at high speed.

The plane was in the air for around 35 minutes before the crash and was flying at an altitude of about 1,000 feet. The pilot had taken the plane on other trips earlier the same day.

Chapman called for witnesses with information or media relevant to the investigation to contact the NTSB at witness@ntsb.gov.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Oregon firefighters to face wind, storms |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/wind-storms-could-spread-wildfires-in-oregon-this-week/ |
| GIST | <p>SALEM, Ore. — Oregon firefighters will face challenges this week as continued heat combines with windy and unstable conditions, possible thunderstorms and unwanted east winds, fire meteorologists said.</p> <p>Forecasters said the concern isn’t on the same level as the 2020 Labor Day fires east wind event, but there is concern about active wildfires near Oakridge, Grants Pass and Joseph spreading as well as new blazes starting and growing quickly.</p> <p>Oregon utilities told the Statesman Journal they’re watching conditions closely and may consider shutting down power lines to limit wildfire danger. Active power lines falling in high winds were at least partly to blame for the Labor Day wildfires.</p> <p>Eric Wise, fire meteorologist for the Northwest Coordination Center, described his level of concern as “about a 6 or 7,” on a scale of 1 to 10.</p> <p>August has generally been the state’s busiest month for wildfires, but in September — when hot and dry east winds are involved — Oregon has experienced the largest wildfire spreads in state history.</p> |

“This is a concerning forecast for Western Oregon, but we’re also not expecting anything like the winds we saw back in 2020,” Wise said about this week.

Wednesday and then Friday into early Saturday are the most concerning days, officials said.

Heat Tuesday and Wednesday combined with an unstable atmosphere could create dry thunderstorms, with lightning strikes that could ignite fires.

Friday and into Saturday is when the east winds are forecast. Unlike the moisture-laden winds from the Pacific, east winds have a tendency to dry out over the Cascade Range and sweep down into Western Oregon.

Weather models are projecting sustained winds speeds around 20 mph with gusts up to 40 mph in the Columbia River Gorge.

That’s decent news for the largest active fire in southwest Oregon — the Cedar Creek fire — which is southeast of Eugene and about 12 miles from Oakridge. The fire, next to Waldo Lake, has burned about 28 square miles and growth appears likely.

Other wildfires likely to be impacted include the Rum Creek fire in southwest Oregon above the Rogue River, and the Double Creek, Sturgill and Nebo fires in the Wallowa Mountains of northeast Oregon.

Pacific Power spokesperson Drew Hanson said if the forecast conditions develop, the utility is prepared to turn off power to reduce wildfire risks. Hanson said the goal is to notify potentially affected customers 48 hours in advance.

Portland General Electric spokesperson Andrea Platt said it was too early to say whether a public safety power shut-off may be called.

Lower temperatures and possibly even rain are expected next week.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Health officials urge: booster vax, flu shot |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/get-a-flu-shot-with-your-updated-covid-booster-king-county-health-officials-urge/ |
| GIST | <p>As summer wanes into fall, new COVID-19 boosters are here — and local public health authorities want you to get vaxxed.</p> <p><i>Again?</i> You might be thinking.</p> <p>Yes, again.</p> <p>“COVID-19 has evolved. It’s evolved new variants that can dodge some of the immunity we get from both past infections as well as our [earlier] vaccinations,” Dr. Jeff Duchin, health officer with Public Health – Seattle & King County, said in a briefing Tuesday.</p> <p>“Even if you’ve had a booster in the past, all recommended booster doses are important for maximum protection.”</p> <p>Community transmission is relatively low in King County, with about 100 new cases per 100,000 residents in the past week. Back in May, the rate was nearly four times higher.</p> |

The new booster is a bivalent vaccine, meaning the original COVID-19 vaccine formula plus the BA. 4 and BA. 5 spike protein components, which together provide additional protection by targeting the omicron subvariants that are more transmissible.

This week an initial allocation of 191,100 bivalent booster doses is en route to providers throughout the state and is now available for scheduling. Officials recommend anyone 12 and older who has already received their initial vaccine series sign up for a booster appointment with their health provider or local pharmacy.

You're most likely eligible for a new booster now, but for immunocompromised people or children under 5, officials [recommend](#) waiting a few months after completing your primary vaccination series.

Residents can consult the state's [Vaccine Locator](#) or call the COVID Information Hotline, 800-525-0127, for more information or help finding a vaccination site.

While you're at your local CVS or doctor's office, consider getting your flu shot as well, officials urged. County health officials have been keeping an eye on influenza by monitoring current outbreaks in New Zealand and Australia. That gives health officials a clue that our flu season may be stronger.

"After the relatively quiet seasons that we've had the last few years with little influenza circulating, it's quite possible that the reintroduction of influenza will be more severe because lots of people haven't seen flu for a couple of years and therefore their immune systems just aren't primed and ready for it," Duchin said.

He suggests one shot for the flu in one arm and a COVID booster shot in the other, if possible.

Officials also gave an update Tuesday on the spread of monkeypox in King County: As with COVID, the spread of the monkeypox virus is on the decline in the county, with one case this month so far, down from a peak of 64 cases during the last week of July.

In total, 383 cases have been reported in the county, namely among men who have sex with men. In one rare [case](#), an infant was reported infected with monkeypox last month.

For people at risk of contracting monkeypox, there will be a vaccination clinic on Saturday at Seattle Central College that will provide both first and second doses.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Shortage: hiring, retaining K-12 teachers |
| SOURCE | https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/hiring-retaining-k12-teachers-washington-schools-shortage/281-b350edc6-6482-4ed1-addc-3d5aa5eec25c |
| GIST | <p>REDMOND, Wash. — The 2021-2022 school year could have been Freedom Schott's final year teaching in the K-12 public school system in Washington state.</p> <p>Many teachers she knew in various districts called it quits over the past two years in large part due to burnout from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Schott was considering her next best career move while still feeling a great passion for education.</p> <p>"I want to give the kids the best of me as an educator as well," Schott said.</p> <p>The four-year special education teacher did not leave the classroom after teaching for three years in the Lake Washington School District (LWSD) and then one year in the Renton School District.</p> <p>Instead, Schott is setting up two classrooms for the 2022-2023 school year - one at Alcott Elementary and the other at Einstein Elementary in the LWSD.</p> |

Schott said splitting her time between two schools as a safety net teacher is a welcomed change of pace. It's one of the main reasons she is still a teacher.

"I want to make sure that I'm still serving the kids," Schott said. "My kids learn because of what I'm doing for them, and if I lose that passion, I don't want that to come off on the students as well."

In her role as a safety net teacher, Schott focuses on students' reading and writing skills.

Keeping teachers like Schott is a challenge across Washington state and across the country.

The U.S. Department of Education reports the demand for teachers in special education, technology, bilingual education and math has been constant, but the COVID-19 pandemic only made the shortage worse and upped the competition to recruit teachers.

On Aug. 31, U.S. Secretary of Labor Martin Walsh and U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona sent a [joint letter to education and workforce leaders](#) with an outline of three recommendations to address the teacher shortage. The letter includes information about establishing high quality paid apprenticeship programs, the benefits of increasing partnerships with workforce and education systems and ensuring teachers are paid a livable and competitive wage.

Camille Alexander, the LWSD human resources executive director, said those recommendations are already part of the district's recruiting strategy.

In addition to recruiting at traditional job fairs and using social media, the district advertises in their school neighborhoods.

"That has been really effective, too, in terms of teachers, but also those classified positions and even bus drivers," Alexander explained. "People want to be a part of the fabric of their community, and sometimes the school is not the first way you think of that."

The district does not have a "formal" apprenticeship program, but Alexander said the district has university partnerships to build working relationships with future educators.

In terms of salaries, Alexander said a first-year teacher without past experience typically starts at about \$56,000, and some teachers with several years of experience and a graduate degree such as a master's or a doctorate could make up to \$105,000. All salaries vary based on those aspects, according to Alexander, who said there are stipends and cost of living adjustments to consider as well.

"Everyone got a 5.5% increase as well as like fringe benefits," Alexander said.

The LWSD is the second-largest school district in the state and serves Kirkland, Redmond, and Sammamish.

As of the first day of school on Sept. 6, the LWSD has 31,467 students enrolled in preschool through 12th grade. So far, the district has 2,202 hired teachers for the 2022-23 school year.

Both numbers are likely to grow in the coming days and weeks as families potentially move into the district and existing open teaching positions are filled.

According to the [LWSD online employment page](#), as of the first week of school, there are [open positions](#) for teachers but also for classroom support staff, school support staff, bus drivers, athletics, custodians and clerical staff.

In Snohomish County, the Everett School District employs an estimated 1,200 teachers each year when it's fully staffed, according to Dr. Chad Golden, the executive director of human resources for the district.

As of the first week of September, 20,238 students were enrolled in the district. It's the [12th largest district](#) in the state.

Golden said the district does a variety of things to attract new teachers while also working to retain current staff.

One of the more exciting and promising parts of the district's strategy, according to Golden, is utilizing a \$100,000 Recruit Washington Teachers Grant.

Like the Lake Washington School District, Golden said Everett schools aim to build a community within the district as well.

In that part of its recruiting plan, the district focuses on the students enrolled in the Introduction to Education High School course. There are currently 44 students enrolled. Golden said the district encourages its own students to not only consider a career in education but to use their talents to teach future students in the schools they once attended.

"Three students are in the process of applying for positions," Golden said.

A few students have shared they will be substituting in the district while they attend Everett Community College.

The Everett School District has seen a steady average of openings of about 123 teaching positions each school year over the past five years.

Golden said those positions are filled by the first day of school or within a few weeks of the first day back. Everett School District Teacher openings at a glance:

- 2018-19 = 139
- 2019-20 = 155
- 2020-21 = 110
- 2021-22 = 124
- 2022-23 = 91

First-year teachers without previous experience start at more than \$64,000. Teachers with experience and a bachelor's and master's degree can make up to more than \$135,800.

Golden said the district held a successful job fair on Aug. 17 as several people were hired on the spot. The district uses social media to advertise openings and has a billboard at Aqua Sox games.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Seattle bans gas powered leaf blowers |
| SOURCE | https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-city-council-approves-ban-gas-powered-leaf-blowers/Q2XXFDWNHVFVBIFSFLSJMEIJRM/ |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE — The Seattle City Council has passed a resolution that would phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Seattle within the next five years.</p> <p>The law would require the city government to transition from gas-powered to electric-powered leaf blowers by January 2025.</p> <p>Seattle businesses and residents would need to make the transition by January 2027.</p> <p>“Nearly everyone hates obnoxious, loud, gas-belching leaf blowers, so why do we allow them to continue damaging eardrums, spraying debris into faces and polluting our city?” said Councilmember Alex</p> |

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| | <p>Pedersen, who sponsored the legislation. “Other cities are banning or phasing out leaf blowers and it’s time to blow them out of Seattle, too.”</p> <p>The resolution will also explore whether the city should offer incentives, such as a buyback program or rebates on replacement purchases, to landscaping businesses and low-income residents in Seattle.</p> <p>The council first began considering strategies to reduce or eliminate the noise and emissions created by the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in 2014.</p> <p>Other U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C. and Burlington, Vermont, as well as the state of California, have already taken steps toward implementing their own leaf blower bans.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Hot, hazy: fire danger returns |
| SOURCE | https://www.krem.com/article/weather/krem-2-weather-forecast/293-a0f43ff2-aa37-4afc-bcfc-b661849f38c1 |
| GIST | <p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Smoke came and went in the Inland Northwest Tuesday. A sign of the ongoing fires and threat of more in the days to come. Hot, dry, windy weather brings the return of fire danger on Wednesday.</p> <p>An incoming dry cold front likely puts Wednesday as the warmest day we will see between now and next summer. The early-day wind will keep temps in the mid 50s for morning lows before they soar to near 90 Wednesday afternoon. The warm push comes in front of that dry cold front that also brings strong southwesterly wind gusts.</p> <p>Wind gusting to near 30 miles per hour throughout the day along with a dry atmosphere and warm temperatures prompted Red Flag Warnings from 8am to 10pm Wednesday. This will likely be one of the most critical fire danger days we’ve seen so far this year because of the dried out vegetation and wind.</p> <p>Even after the Red Flag Warnings expire, fire danger remains elevated through the remainder of the workweek. Behind the cold front, wind will remain breezy. A shift to northerly drops temps back to near 80, but the atmosphere remains dry and the fire fuel remains an ongoing threat.</p> <p>Temperatures will climb back into the mid 80s for the weekend. Right now it looks like fire danger will ebb a little, but it's important to be safe as we head through the end of the dry stretch of summer.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Seaplane buoys on Lake Union controversy |
| SOURCE | https://www.q13fox.com/news/buoys-draw-line-of-controversy-on-south-lake-union |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE - Several seaplane companies use Lake Union in Seattle to deliver passengers only a mile from the city’s business and technology core.</p> <p>However, there is controversy growing over a string of buoys placed near the southern shore. The buoys are intended to alert visitors of incoming or outgoing aircraft, but some worry the message they send unfairly pushes out others on the water.</p> <p>Part of the controversy is the language written on the buoys. Some worry it spells out an outright directive for people to permanently clear a wide swath of waterway, even as the agencies, which regulate the buoys, say the warnings should only read as advisories.</p> <p>Seaplanes have played a significant role in Seattle’s history. The city’s growth will likely propel the industry to grow as well. Kenmore Air has been operating on the lake for decades. Today it is one of three airliners operating from Lake Union.</p> <p>"It’s supposed to be a lake used for all, not a carve out in the center of the lake for one user," said neighbor Peter Erickson.</p> |

Erickson lives along the lake's shore and he shouts aloud his allegiance to Save Lake Union, a campaign by Seaplanes Environmental Coalition that claims the buoys intended to warn people of incoming aircraft might instead leave an impression that a strip of water is exclusive for seaplanes.

"There is going to be more and more flights," said Erickson.

For more than 70 years, seaplanes have used this lake to shuttle passengers. The lake sits a mile from some of Seattle's largest tech companies and is an attractive alternative to Sea-Tac International Airport.

"They can bring in executives from Vancouver," said Darby DuComb. "It's beautiful to do all that, but it's coming at a cost to the neighbors."

DuComb is an attorney representing the coalition, which at the end of August sent a letter to Seattle officials claiming the buoys do not comply with its permit and asking regulators to make the permit holder issue corrections.

The Recreational Boating Association of Washington blitzed Lake Union's neighborhood with public service announcements asking everyone on the water to mind the zone. The Washington State Department of Ecology says the permit limits markings on the buoy to be advisory in nature, and to not restrict the public from being inside the immediate area. The coalition complains the markings currently instruct people on the lake to move 200 feet west or east when aircraft are incoming or outgoing, essentially in conflict with the permit.

Kenmore Air is responsible for installing and maintaining the buoys. Company leadership told FOX 13 News it disagrees with the coalition, describing the wording on the buoys as a difference in interpretation.

Erickson worries the language should be clear that everyone has a right to access the lake.

"If we don't do something it will be a problem," he said. "Let's get ahead of it and not react."

The buoys are seasonal and will be removed from Lake Union in the coming days before being reinstalled next summer.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Back to school: pediatric Covid cases rise |
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| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/Health/pediatric-covid-19-infections-increase-kids-head-back/story?id=89423365 |
| GIST | <p>As children head back to the classroom for the academic year, new data shows that pediatric COVID-19 infection rates have increased for the second consecutive week.</p> <p>Last week, more than 90,600 additional child COVID-19 cases were reported, an increase of 14% from two weeks prior, when just under 80,000 cases were reported, according to a new report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA).</p> <p>The increase comes despite an overall plateauing of COVID-19 infections nationally.</p> <p>Overall, totals remain significantly lower than during other parts of the pandemic. Since mid-May, data shows that new cases have plateaued, fluctuating between a high of about 68,000 to 112,000 cases.</p> <p>However, many Americans who are taking at-home tests are not submitting their results, and thus, experts say daily case totals are likely significantly higher than the numbers that are officially reported.</p> <p>More than 14.5 million children have tested positive for the virus since the onset of the pandemic, and since the beginning of 2022, approximately 6.65 million reported cases have been added. Children represent about a fifth of all reported cases on record.</p> |

Despite the uptick in infections, with COVID-19 vaccine mandates in schools still virtually nonexistent, millions of children remain completely unvaccinated.

Overall, about 43.1 million eligible children remain completely unvaccinated, according to federal data.

Most of the nearly 30 million children who have received at least one shot are older children. The vast majority of the youngest Americans under the age of 5 -- or just 1 million out of the 19.5 million children in that age group -- have yet to receive a COVID-19 shot, according to federal data.

AAP and CHA said there is an "urgent" need to collect more age-specific data to assess the severity of illness related to new variants, as well as potential longer-term effects.

"It is important to recognize there are immediate effects of the pandemic on children's health, but importantly, we need to identify and address the long-lasting impacts on the physical, mental and social well-being of this generation of children and youth," the organizations wrote.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Mystery: growth new Covid variants stalls |
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| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/Health/growth-covid-19-variants-stagnates-health-experts-ahead/story?id=89407750 |
| GIST | <p>Throughout much of the pandemic, there has been a constant shifting in terms of which COVID-19 variants are most dominant, at a given time, in the U.S.</p> <p>However, for the last five weeks, federal data shows that there has been little to no growth in the different proportions of COVID-19 variants in the country.</p> <p>For more than nine months, the omicron variant, and its subvariants, have been dominant in the U.S. But now, health experts say it is unclear why the growth of the omicron strains appears to have stagnated, or why it is that no other significant variants have emerged to challenge its dominance.</p> <p>"Unlike previous variants, BA.5 appears to have more staying power. A mix of higher transmissibility, waning immunity and relaxed restrictions likely contribute to the ability of this variant to find more hosts to infect," said John Brownstein, Ph.D., an epidemiologist at Boston Children's Hospital and an ABC News contributor.</p> <p>BA.5 is currently estimated to account for about 88.6% of new COVID-19 infections -- a share that has plateaued over the last five weeks, according to updated data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>BA.4 currently accounts for an estimated 2.8% of new cases in the U.S., and a recently identified subvariant, BA.4.6, is estimated to account for 8.4% of new cases -- up slightly from last week when the subvariant accounted for 7.6% of new cases.</p> <p>Combined, the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants account for nearly 100% of new cases in the U.S., according to the CDC data.</p> <p>The BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants appear to have a transmission advantage over the original omicron strain, according to the World Health Organization, and thus, scientists have been closely monitoring the increase in reported cases. At this time, it does not appear as though BA.5 has an increase in severity.</p> <p>The slowing of the omicron strain's growth pattern leaves many questions unanswered as to whether there will be viral resurgence in the fall and winter.</p> <p>"We still have open questions as to what this means for a fall surge and the opportunities for a new variant to displace it," Brownstein said.</p> |

The stagnation of growth with the omicron variants comes as the U.S. appears to experience a parallel plateauing of new COVID-19 infections. The nation had been reporting consistent declines throughout the late summer, but in recent weeks, that number has been hovering around 84,000 new cases each day, according to the CDC.

As previously reported, dozens of states have moved to shutter public testing sites, with more at-home COVID-19 tests now available. Most Americans are not reporting their results to officials, and thus, experts suggest that infection totals are likely significantly undercounted.

Just over 400,000 tests are being reported each day, marking the lowest number of confirmed tests since the onset of the pandemic.

Although new case rates are still dropping in parts of the West, across areas of the Northeast, the Midwest and even parts of the South, case rates have plateaued at a high level or are showing signs of increasing again.

Hospital admission levels also appear to be plateauing nationally. About 5,100 virus-positive Americans are entering the hospital each day, down by about 3.7% in the last week, according to CDC data.

Death rates also remain persistently high, with hundreds of Americans still losing their lives to the virus each day. According to the CDC, the average number of daily COVID-19-related deaths remains more than 400 deaths reported each day.

Thousands are still losing their lives every week, and over the last seven days alone, the U.S. has reported more than 2,800 deaths -- still one of the highest weekly totals in months.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 China's export growth, imports shrink |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/chinas-export-growth-sinks-august-imports-shrink-89438960 |
| GIST | <p>BEIJING -- China's trade weakened in August as high energy prices, inflation and anti-virus measures weighed on global and Chinese consumer demand, while imports of Russian oil and gas surged.</p> <p>Exports rose 7% over a year ago to \$314.9 billion, decelerating from July's 18% expansion, customs data showed Wednesday. Imports contracted by 0.2% to \$235.5 billion, compared with the previous month's already weak 2.3% growth.</p> <p>Demand for Chinese exports has softened as Western economies cool and the Federal Reserve and central banks in Europe and Asia raise interest rates to contain surging inflation. At home, repeated closures of Chinese cities to fight virus outbreaks has weighed on consumers' willingness to spend.</p> <p>"The slowdown in China's export sector is adding to headwinds for the Chinese economy," said Rajiv Biswas of S&P Global Market Intelligence in a report. Lack of import growth highlights "continued weakness of Chinese domestic demand."</p> <p>Growth in the world's second-largest economy fell to 2.5% in the first half of 2022, less than half the ruling Communist Party's 5.5% annual target, after Shanghai and other industrial centers were shut down to fight virus outbreaks.</p> <p>Factories have reopened, but restrictions more recently in areas including the southern business center of Shenzhen weighed on activity. So has a dry summer that left reservoirs in the southwest unable to generate hydropower and disrupted river shipping.</p> <p>The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters have trimmed their already low growth forecasts.</p> |

China's global trade surplus widened by 36.1% over a year earlier to \$79.4 billion.

Exports to the United States sank 3.8% from a year ago to \$49.8 billion while imports of American goods declined 7.3% to \$13 billion. The politically sensitive trade surplus with the United States that helped to spark a tariff war narrowed by 2.4% to \$36.7 billion.

President Joe Biden has left in place tariff hikes imposed by his predecessor, Donald Trump, in a fight over Beijing's technology development tactics. Beijing retaliated by raising its own import duties and told Chinese companies to stop buying American exports.

Envoys from the two sides talk by phone but have yet to announce a date to resume negotiations.

Imports from Russia, mostly oil and gas, surged 59.3% to \$11.2 billion as China appeared to take advantage of discounts offered by the Kremlin to attract buyers in the face of Western sanctions over its war on Ukraine.

China's purchases of Russian energy irritate Washington and its allies but don't violate sanctions on Moscow. Last year, China bought 20% of Russian crude exports, according to the International Energy Agency.

Beijing declared ahead of the February invasion that it had a "no limits" friendship with Moscow. It criticizes the sanctions but has avoided helping President Vladimir Putin for fear of losing access to Western markets and the global banking system.

Exports to Russia rose 26.5% to \$8 billion.

Exports to the 27-nation European Union tumbled 18.4% to \$51.3 billion, reflecting weak European demand.

Imports of European goods plunged 33.1% to \$26 billion. China's trade surplus with Europe widened by 5.4% to \$25.3 billion.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 California record-breaking heatwave |
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| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/bay-area-hit-record-temperatures-officials-californians-conserve/story?id=89413294 |
| GIST | <p>Temperatures in parts of the San Francisco Bay Area have hit record numbers as state officials warn of blackouts throughout the state as Californians deals with intense heat.</p> <p>The temperature in Livermore, located in the eastern part of the Bay Area, reached 116 degrees on Monday, the highest temperature recorded in the Bay area, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Santa Rosa, California, hit 112 degrees on Monday, breaking its previous record of 110 degrees; Gilroy, California, also reached 112 degrees, tying the record set in 2017 and 2020, according to NWS.</p> <p>California is going through a record-breaking heat wave that may be the hottest and longest in the state for September, Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a video posted Tuesday on Twitter.</p> <p>The state's power grid is also being pushed to the brink and runs the risk of outages, according to California Independent System Operators (CAISO), which runs the state's electrical grid.</p> <p>CAISO has thanked state residents for helping conserve as much energy as possible to lower the power load. "Forecasts showed that electrical demand could reach over 51,000 megawatts on Tuesday -- the</p> |

highest demand ever on the state's energy grid, exceeding the previous high of 50,270 megawatts in 2006, CAISO said."

CAISO issued an Energy Emergency Alert to residents Tuesday evening to conserve energy because extreme heat is putting pressure on the power grid.

The organization urged residents to set their thermostats to 78 degrees, turn off lights when not being used, unplug unused electronics and to pre-cool their homes earlier in the day.

"We're heading to the worst part of this heat wave and the risk for outages is real and it's immediate," Newsom said. "These triple-digit temperatures throughout much of our state are leading, nor surprisingly, to record demand on the energy grid."

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Leading Georgia art college suffers attack |
| SOURCE | https://therecord.media/ransomware-attack-on-leading-georgia-art-college-leads-to-data-leak/ |
| GIST | <p>Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) — an acclaimed art school in the U.S. serving more than 15,000 students — suffered a ransomware attack that leaked the sensitive information of hundreds of people.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the school told The Record that it recently discovered a hacker had gained access to SCAD's information network systems.</p> <p>The school hired third party cybersecurity experts who isolated the incident and launched an investigation. Law enforcement has been notified and is working with cybersecurity experts on the investigation, they said.</p> <p>"Due to the university's early detection and rapid response, the incident had no operational impact to the university," a spokesperson said. "After a forensic investigation, SCAD has reason to believe that a limited number of files containing personal information of certain current and former students and employees were accessed by the unauthorized actor responsible for the incident."</p> <p>The school said it has already notified all of the people who had information accessed during the attack and has provided them with ways they can protect themselves. They did not say what information was accessed. The college was ranked the top art school in the U.S. last year by Art & Object and says it has students from 120 countries.</p> <p>This weekend, the AvosLocker ransomware group added SCAD to its leak site, giving the school a two week deadline to pay an undisclosed ransom.</p> <p>The group claims to have stolen a database of phone numbers, email addresses and more. Experts at DataBreaches.net examined the data leaked by AvosLocker and found that the group managed to take at least 69,000 files that contained student information, personnel files and business data.</p> <p>This included passports, bank statements, disciplinary files and other documents that had Social Security numbers, according to DataBreaches.net. The ransomware group told the website that SCAD allegedly negotiated with them for an undisclosed ransom but did not end up paying.</p> <p>The AvosLocker gang updated its leak site in October 2021 and created a system allowing them to auction off stolen data from organizations that refuse to pay ransoms.</p> |

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| | <p>Emsisoft threat analyst and ransomware expert Brett Callow said SCAD is the 24th U.S. college or university hit with ransomware in 2022. Throughout 2021, Emsisoft tracked 26 total ransomware attacks on colleges and universities in the U.S.</p> <p>Ohlone College, Savannah State University, University of Detroit Mercy, Centralia College, Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, National University College, North Carolina A&T University, Florida International University, Stratford University are just a few of the U.S. schools attacked with ransomware this year.</p> <p>The FBI said in May that Russian cybercrime forums are teeming with the network credentials and virtual private network accesses of employees from U.S. colleges and universities.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Leak: Russia's most needed war tech |
| SOURCE | https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/09/leaked-shopping-list-reveals-russias-most-desperately-needed-war-tech/ |
| GIST | <p>Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal this week told Politico that he expects that diminished access to technology will be the driving force staving off Russia's ongoing attacks. Since invading Ukraine, Russia has spent months burning through nearly half of the critical military technology in its arsenal, and now Politico has shared a leaked "shopping list" of tech that Russia is most urgently seeking to replenish its stockpile.</p> <p>"According to our information, Russians have already spent almost half... of their weaponry arsenal," Shmyhal told Politico.</p> <p>Among about two dozen "chokepoint technologies" that Russia "most desperately" needs to stay in the fight are microchips manufactured by eight US tech companies that America hopes to block Russia from accessing through sanctions.</p> <p>Those companies include Marvell, Intel, Holt, ISSI, Microchip, Micron, Broadcom, and Texas Instruments. Sanctions can only go so far to limit distribution from these companies, though, as Russia will likely look to third parties or unregulated markets to fill the gap. Ars reached out to all US tech companies for comment, but only a few immediately responded.</p> <p>"We take our responsibility as a good corporate citizen seriously," Brian Thorsen, a Microchip spokesperson, told Ars. "In compliance with export laws, and because actions by Russia against the Ukraine are in opposition to our Guiding Values, Microchip ceased shipments to customers in Russia, Belarus, and sanctioned regions in the Ukraine."</p> <p>"For over a decade all of Intel's sales in Russia have been through distributors who are required to comply with US export controls," Penny Bruce, Intel's corporate communications director, told Ars. "Intel has suspended all shipments to customers in both Russia and Belarus and will continue to comply with all applicable export regulations and sanctions in the countries in which it operates. This includes compliance with the sanctions and export controls against Russia and Belarus issued by the US and allied nations."</p> <p>In March, Marvell posted a similar statement directed to business partners: "Marvell is stopping all transactions of its products directly and indirectly to customers based in Russia, Belarus, Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) regions of Ukraine."</p> <p>Politico reported that some of the tech parts that Russia seeks could still potentially be accessed easily and smuggled into Russia via unregulated online markets, but other products have long been out of stock globally.</p> |

Without more microchips—as well as other items on the Kremlin's shopping list like "semiconductors, transformers, connectors, casings, transistors, insulators, and other components"—Russia may lose its most powerful missile technology and perhaps even be forced to withdraw from the conflict.

Shmyhal told Politico the "outcome of the war" could "hinge" on whether Russia can quickly stockpile microchips, which is why Ukraine has issued international warnings to alert other countries to help cut off Russia's supply. For now, the strategy appears to be working in Ukraine's favor.

"Because of sanctions imposed on Russia, the deliveries of this high-tech microchip equipment... have stopped and they have no way of replenishing these stocks," Shmyhal told Politico.

Restricting items on Russia's shopping list

The source of Politico's leaked shopping list couldn't be independently verified. Instead, Politico spoke to "two experts in military supply chains" who "confirmed it was in line with other research findings about Russia's military equipment and needs."

The shopping list is divided into three categories, ranked from low to critical importance. Items considered most critical included microchips costing anywhere from \$7 to more than \$1,000 per unit, most sourced from US companies.

Not every US company has taken a public stance to support Ukraine, but some US companies [like Intel](#) have published statements condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And [Texas Instruments has donated funds](#) to Ukrainian relief efforts.

Intel described in an email how it attempts to block business partners from distributing products restricted under sanctions: "While we do not always know nor can we control what products our customers create or the applications end-users may develop, Intel does not support or tolerate our products being used to violate human rights," Bruce told Ars. "Where we become aware of a concern that Intel products are being used by a business partner in connection with abuses of human rights, we will restrict or cease business with the third party until and unless we have high confidence that Intel's products are not being used to violate human rights."

Other countries with products on Russia's shopping list that were marked as critical included Germany, Japan, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, China, and the Netherlands. A major concern for Ukraine allies is that non-allies like China will help Russia circumvent sanctions to access tech and prolong the war effort. Without China, Russia would find it much harder to "acquire the most sensitive tech" listed, Politico reported.

In the meantime, Russia has turned to old-fashioned weaponry. Shmyhal told Politico that Russia only has "four dozen" high-tech hypersonic missiles left and has been relying on 1960s-era military tech until the country's high-tech military supplies can be built back up.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian military forces have access to technology from US and European allies, which the international think tank the [European Council on Foreign Relations has reported](#) better positions Ukraine to "pinpoint the weaknesses of the Russian military." Last month, [the BBC reported](#) on how Ukraine's enhanced tech capabilities have already proven to be an advantage in counterattacks that now, Shmyhal told Politico, represent an "inflection point" in the war.

Prolonged impact of Russian sanctions

While sanctions against Russia have hampered its access to key military tech, [Bloomberg reports](#) that "Russia may face a longer and deeper recession as the impact of US and European sanctions spreads."

According to a Russian internal government report from a meeting of top Russian officials that Bloomberg reviewed, sanctions that cut off "about a quarter" of Russian imports and exports is affecting "practically all forms of transport." An expert told Bloomberg that key sectors that typically generate billions for the

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| | <p>country annually—including oil and gas, chemicals, and metals—will no longer drive Russia's economy by 2050.</p> <p>Russia's attempts to advance its own tech and become self-reliant could be further frustrated by these economic setbacks. It seems that while Russia invests billions into building its own tech sector, "200,000 IT specialists may leave the country by 2025" due to the projected long-term economic setbacks. Because of this, Bloomberg reports that Russia's "telecommunications sector may fall five years behind world leaders in 2022."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Educational institutions suffer cyberattacks |
| SOURCE | https://www.scmagazine.com/news/cloud-security/almost-half-of-educational-institutions-had-a-cloud-based-cyberattack |
| GIST | <p>Netwrix on Tuesday published a report that said 47% of educational institutions suffered a cyberattack on their cloud infrastructure within the last 12 months.</p> <p>The survey on the education sector was part of a broader survey, but Netwrix opted to offer these additional vertical industry findings.</p> <p>Dirk Schrader, vice president of security research at Netwrix, said for 27% of the attacks on education, incidents around cloud security were associated with unplanned expenses to fix security gaps. Schrader also added that educational institutions expect to have 56% of their workloads in the cloud by the end of 2023, compared with this year's 44%.</p> <p>"But without proper visibility into who has access to sensitive data and when and how that data is being used, IT teams will not be able to proactively mitigate data overexposure and spot suspicious behavior in the cloud," Schrader said.</p> <p>Educational institutions possess large volumes of sensitive student data and unfortunately, most security solutions used by school districts were designed to protect on-premises data and apps, said Tony D'Angelo, vice president, public sector, at Lookout. D'Angelo said schools are ill-equipped to account for apps that reside in the cloud or student data that lives and travels on mobile devices, hotspots and throughout the internet.</p> <p>"To ensure sensitive data is protected, educational institutions must rethink their security strategy," said D'Angelo. "Simply deploying modern security products for one-off use cases isn't enough. Some systems focus on implementing a secure web gateway to support secure access to the internet. That's necessary, but not sufficient, as it leaves out other parts of student activity, such as mobile devices and various cloud apps."</p> <p>Chloé Messdaghi, chief impact officer at Cybrary, said schools are attractive targets and are often an entry point for threat actors into state, county and local governments, simply because their cybersecurity bar is so much lower and governmental networks are so large. Messdaghi said educational institutions have been used as stepping stones or ladder steps to ultimately reach other governmental targets.</p> <p>"There will always be kids out there who want to change grades, and see student and teacher records," Messdaghi said. "There's also stalkers who follow kids on TikTok and Instagram and then seek to get to them through their education institutions. Unfortunately, too many educational institutions don't have the funds and expertise to prevent this. That's why all of us in cybersecurity should volunteer our free time to help educational institutions develop best practices, help them follow those steps to tighten day-to-day cybersecurity, and also put together and regularly update incident response plans that institutions can act on immediately."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 QNAP: new Deadbolt ransomware attacks |
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| SOURCE | https://www.securityweek.com/qnap-warns-new-deadbolt-ransomware-attacks-targeting-nas-users |
| GIST | <p>Taiwanese network-attached storage (NAS) solutions provider QNAP Systems over the weekend issued a fresh warning of new Deadbolt ransomware attacks targeting its NAS users.</p> <p>Initially spotted in January 2022, the Deadbolt ransomware appends the .deadbolt extension to the encrypted files, while also hijacking the NAS device's login page, to prevent victims from accessing their files.</p> <p>The new Deadbolt attacks were first seen on September 3, attempting to exploit a vulnerability in the Photo Station photo management application.</p> <p>"QNAP Systems, Inc. today detected the security threat Deadbolt leveraging exploitation of Photo Station vulnerability to encrypt QNAP NAS that are directly connected to the internet," the company announced on Saturday.</p> <p>Over the weekend, the company also released a patched version of Photo Station to prevent further exploitation, urging users to update their installations as soon as possible.</p> <p>QNAP says that patches for the exploited vulnerability were included in Photo Station versions 5.2.14 (for QTS 4.2.6), 5.4.15 (QTS 4.3.3), 5.7.18 (QTS 4.3.6), 6.0.22 (QTS 5.0.0/4.5.x), and 6.1.2 (QTS 5.0.1).</p> <p>As an alternative, the manufacturer suggests that users may switch to QuMagie, another photo managing solution for QNAP NAS devices.</p> <p>QNAP underlines that its NAS devices should not be directly connected to the internet.</p> <p>"We recommend users to make use of the myQNAPcloud Link feature provided by QNAP, or enable the VPN service. This can effectively harden the NAS and decrease the chance of being attacked," the company says.</p> <p>Users are advised to update their QNAP devices to the most recent firmware release, update all applications running on those devices, use strong passwords, backup all of their data, and disable port forwarding on their routers.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Source code 'CodeRAT' backdoor online |
| SOURCE | https://www.securityweek.com/source-code-new-coderat-backdoor-published-online |
| GIST | <p>The developer of the new 'CodeRAT' backdoor has released their malware's source code online after being confronted by security researchers, cybersecurity firm SafeBreach reports.</p> <p>The new remote access trojan (RAT) was seen being deployed via a malicious Word document carrying a Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) exploit.</p> <p>Packing support for roughly 50 commands, CodeRAT is designed to monitor a victim's activity on a local machine (documents, databases, integrated development environments (IDEs)) and online (social networks, games, and pornographic sites), and appears targeted at Iranian users.</p> <p>"This type of monitoring—specifically of pornographic sites, use of anonymous browsing tools, and social network activities—leads us to believe CodeRAT is an intelligence tool used by a threat actor tied to a government," SafeBreach says.</p> <p>The lure document and the targeting of applications specifically designed for Farsi-speaking users suggest that the RAT might be used by Iran's Islamic regime for the monitoring of illegal/immoral activities of their citizens.</p> |

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| Return to Top | <p>CodeRAT can communicate over Telegram and uses an anonymous, public uploading site instead of a dedicated command and control (C&C) server.</p> <p>“CodeRAT supports approximately 50 different commands relevant to files, process actions, and stealing capabilities of screen captures, clipboards, files, and environmental info. It also supports commands for upgrading or installing other malware binaries,” SafeBreach notes.</p> <p>The malware has five modes of operation, generates a unique ID for each victim, and can receive commands via a local file (command.txt, under myPictures folder), via the main user interface, and via the Telegram bot API.</p> <p>The RAT continuously checks if a boss.txt file exists under the myPictures folder. If the file exists, the malware unhides its main window, allowing the user to perform manual operations. The threat also has a second hidden UI form, which runs if the ‘data’ and ‘zn’ directories exist in its working directory.</p> <p>According to SafeBreach, evidence suggests that CodeRAT is currently being used to target Iranian developers. Lure documents in Farsi, the targeting of specific applications (Visual Studio, Python, PhpStorm, and Verilog), and the targeting of the sensitive window Digikala, an Iranian e-commerce company based in Tehran, support this belief.</p> <p>Moreover, the security firm believes that the threat actors behind CodeRAT might be named Mohsen and Siavahsh, both Persian names.</p> <p>SafeBreach was able to identify the developer of CodeRAT as (who uses the moniker of ‘Mr Moded’) the individual behind RoboThief, a Telegram session stealer. After being confronted about the malware, the developer published CodeRAT’s source code to their GitHub account.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Lessons from Nomad crypto hack |
| SOURCE | https://www.hackread.com/lesson-from-nomad-crypto-hack/ |
| GIST | <p>In what sounds like a case of gross negligence, Nomad, a new start-up in the cryptocurrency space, lost \$190 million in a series of hacks. But in this instance, calling it hacks is being too nice. Usually, hackers require skills and strategies that take time and effort to execute.</p> <p>Apparently, in Nomad’s case, the attacks were a “free-for-all” crypto spree where anyone, even people with no prior IT skills, could seize on the platform’s shortcomings and withdraw crypto from its accounts. To make matters worse, the hackers could even withdraw more that was available in the accounts.</p> <p>If you’re baffled like we are, grab onto your socks and keep reading to learn more about what might have transpired at Nomad.</p> <p>What is Nomad Crypto Startup?</p> <p>Nomad is a crypto wallet or bridge that lets you transfer crypto from one blockchain network to another safely and conveniently. Obviously, not. But crypto bridges work by wrapping tokens on one network to an equivalent amount on another. This might sound complicated, but it’s really not. Think of wrapped tokens as representations of the value of the original token on other platforms.</p> <p>Furthermore, Nomad is a blockchain messaging platform that allows players such as developers to share arbitrary data across chains and even make smart contracts. The service makes online collaborations when developing blockchain applications while working from different regions much more convenient.</p> <p>What Safety Considerations Should You Have When Buying Crypto?</p> <p>It’s unfortunate, but the world of cryptocurrency is cutthroat in every sense of the word. On the business side, hundreds of currencies exist, and more are joining the market every day, driving up the competition. There are also hundreds of different crypto products at various stages of their development process.</p> |

Furthermore, we are also only starting to understand the real implications of blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies.

Unfortunately, this has also created the perfect storm for scammers and players with malicious intent to thrive. For instance, [in the case of Nomad](#), even though we still maintain that this is a case of gross negligence, it also reflects the prevalent evils in this space. However, vulnerabilities, where anyone can just walk into a platform and withdraw more than there is, should not exist in the first place.

The pill is easier to swallow when you hear hackers went on a phishing expedition or discovered a system flaw that moves the industry's security forward. As such, you should be very keen with any dealings or transactions you make with crypto to avoid being one of the victims.

One way to protect yourself is to [buy crypto with a prepaid card](#) that does not link back to your primary accounts or personal information. This will limit your risk of losing more than is on the prepaid card if you get hacked or compromised somehow.

You should also only sign on to crypto services like bridges, wallets, exchanges, and currencies on reputable platforms with a proven safety record. As important as first adapters are to the product introduction cycle, we can all agree it's safer to step back from new ones in the crypto scene. This will ensure you're not one of the people who lose their investments from hacks like the one witnessed at Nomad.

A problem to Solve

The truth is that stories of people invested in a new crypto venture losing their money are [common in the news today](#), and we have all but grown numb and accustomed to them. But it should not be this way.

For far too long, hackers and ill-prepared crypto platforms have cost far too many their crypto investments and confidence in the system. And even though, in Nomad's case, they have attempted to recover the lost funds, we think it's time authorities take a hard look at the [crypto industry](#) and provide lasting solutions to the problems that plague it.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 IHG Hotels & Resorts disrupted by breach |
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| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/intercontinental-hotels-group-cyberattack-disrupts-booking-systems/ |
| GIST | <p>Leading hospitality company InterContinental Hotels Group PLC (also known as IHG Hotels & Resorts) says its information technology (IT) systems have been disrupted since yesterday after its network was breached.</p> <p>IHG is a British multinational company that currently operates 6,028 hotels in more than 100 countries and has more than 1,800 in the development pipeline.</p> <p>Its brands include luxury, premium, and essential hotel chains such as InterContinental, Regent, Six Senses, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, and many others.</p> <p>"InterContinental Hotels Group PLC (IHG or the Company) reports that parts of the Company's technology systems have been subject to unauthorised activity," the company said in a filing with the London Stock Exchange on Tuesday.</p> <p>"IHG's booking channels and other applications have been significantly disrupted since yesterday, and this is ongoing."</p> <p>The global hotel group has hired the services of external experts to investigate the incident and is also notifying relevant regulatory authorities.</p> |

Signs of a ransomware attack?

While the company did not reveal any details regarding the nature of the attack, it did mention in its disclosure that it's working on restoring impacted systems.

This hints at a possible ransomware attack where the threat actors have deployed ransomware payloads and encrypted systems on IHG's network.

In most ransomware incidents, the attackers will also steal sensitive information from their targets' networks before encryption.

This is later used in double extortion schemes where the victims are pressured into paying a ransom under the threat of leaking the stolen data.

"IHG is working to fully restore all systems as soon as possible and to assess the nature, extent and impact of the incident," IHG added.

"We will be supporting hotel owners and operators as part of our response to the ongoing service disruption. IHG's hotels are still able to operate and to take reservations directly."

Last month, the Lockbit ransomware gang claimed an attack on Holiday Inn Istanbul Kadıköy, one of the hotels operated by IHG.

From BleepingComputer's tests, the hotel group's APIs are also down and showing 502 and 503 HTTP errors.

Customers are also unable to log in at the moment, with IHG's app displaying "Something went wrong. The credentials you entered are invalid. Please reset your password or contact Customer Care."

Cybercrime intelligence company Hudson Rock [says](#) that IHG has at least 15 compromised employees and more than 4,000 compromised users, according to data linked to the ihg[.]com domain.

The hotel chain giant was also [the target of a three-month security breach in 2017](#)—between September 29 to December 29—when more than 1,200 InterContinental franchised hotels in the United States were impacted.

An IHG spokesperson denied commenting when contacted by BleepingComputer earlier today, saying that "outside of the statement, we don't have any more that we can say at the moment."

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 FBI: 'Vice Society' targets school districts |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-warns-of-vice-society-ransomware-attacks-on-school-districts/ |
| GIST | <p>FBI, CISA, and MS-ISAC warned today of U.S. school districts being increasingly targeted by the Vice Society ransomware group, with more attacks expected after the start of the new school year.</p> <p>"The FBI, CISA, and the MS-ISAC have recently observed Vice Society actors disproportionately targeting the education sector with ransomware attacks," today's joint advisory reads.</p> <p>They also "anticipate attacks may increase as the 2022/2023 school year begins and criminal ransomware groups perceive opportunities for successful attacks."</p> <p>The joint advisory also provides network defenders with Vice Society indicators of compromise (IOCs) and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) observed by the FBI in attacks as recently as September 2022.</p> |

"The FBI, CISA, and the MS-ISAC encourage organizations to implement the recommendations in the Mitigations section of this CSA to reduce the likelihood and impact of ransomware incidents," the advisory adds.

Attacks on the education sector, mainly targeting kindergarten through K-12 institutions, have a massive impact on their operations, ranging from restricted access to networks and data, delayed exams, and canceled school days to the theft of personal information belonging to students and school staff.

One such attack was [disclosed today by Los Angeles Unified \(LAUSD\)](#), the second largest school district in the U.S., after a ransomware attack took down some of its Information Technology (IT) systems over the weekend—LAUSD hasn't yet attributed the attack to a specific ransomware gang.

Victims asked to share attack details with the FBI

Network defenders are advised to take measures to defend against and limit the impact of ransomware attacks, including prioritizing and remediating known exploited vulnerabilities, training their users to recognize and report phishing attempts commonly used as initial attack vectors, and enabling and enforcing multifactor authentication.

The FBI also asked victims to share logs and other information linked to the attacks.

"The FBI is seeking any information that can be shared, to include boundary logs showing communication to and from foreign IP addresses, a sample ransom note, communications with Vice Society actors, Bitcoin wallet information, decryptor files, and/or a benign sample of an encrypted file," the federal law enforcement agency said.

[Vice Society](#) is a threat group known for deploying multiple ransomware strains on their victims' networks, such as [Hello Kitty/Five Hands](#) and [Zeppelin ransomware](#).

They also steal sensitive data from compromised systems before encryption and later use it for double-extortion, threatening their victims to leak the stolen data if their ransom demand isn't paid.

One of the group's recent victims is the [Austrian Medical University of Innsbruck](#) which was forced to reset all 3,400 students' and 2,200 employees' account passwords after severe IT service disruption and data stolen in the attack being leaked on the gang's data leak site.

Emsisoft threat analyst Brett Callow [said](#) that ransomware attacks had disrupted education at roughly 1,000 universities, colleges, and schools during 2021.

In November, U.S. Senators Maggie Hassan, Kyrsten Sinema, Jacky Rosen, and Chris Van Hollen urged the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to [strengthen cybersecurity protections at K-12 schools](#) to keep up with this massive wave of attacks.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Minecraft: hacker's favorite game title |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/minecraft-is-hackers-favorite-game-title-for-hiding-malware/ |
| GIST | <p>Security researchers have discovered that Minecraft is the most heavily abused game title by cybercriminals, who use it to lure unsuspecting players into installing malware.</p> <p>Based on stats collected by the security firm between July 2021 and July 2022, Minecraft-related files accounted for roughly 25% of malicious files spreading via game brand abuse, followed by FIFA (11%), Roblox (9.5%), Far Cry (9.4%), and Call of Duty (9%).</p> <p>Other game titles with notable percentages of abuse during this period are Need for Speed, Grand Theft Auto, Valorant, The Sims, and GS:GO.</p> |

On the mobile space, Kaspersky recorded much smaller distribution volumes than those seen on PC gaming. Yet, Minecraft dominates this category, too, with a 40% share, followed by GTA (15%), PUBG (10%), Roblox (10%), and FIFA (5%).

In terms of yearly trends, [Kaspersky reports](#) seeing a drop in both the volumes of distribution (-30%) and the number of affected users (-36%) compared to 2020.

Why hackers use games as lures

Some recent examples of hiding malware in packages promoted as game cheats, installers, keygens, or as the games themselves are the following:

- Minecraft alt lists on gaming forums dropping [Chaos ransomware](#)
- NPM packages posing as [Roblox libraries](#) delivering ransomware and password stealers
- Games clones on the Microsoft Store containing [malware loaders](#)
- [Valorant cheats](#) promoted via YouTube dropping info-stealing malware

The reason why hackers leverage game titles to lure people is mainly the massive targeting pool, as the abused game titles attract the interest of tens of millions of people.

Moreover, modern games almost always involve the in-game economy aspect, so promises for “easy progress” through hacks, valuable items, and cheats of all kinds are enticing to users.

Games themselves often have a prohibitory cost for some people who then seek pirated alternatives. Other games are in a closed beta development status, excluding many interested individuals, causing users to search for different ways to gain access. Hackers exploit these conditions by offering fake pirated versions of phony beta testing launchers.

Finally, because many game-related mods, cheats, and tools are made by unofficial one-person projects and face false positive security detections, many developers warn victims to disable antivirus before installing them.

Due to this, gamers may ignore AV warnings and execute detected malware programs on their systems.

Other threat types with substantial percentages are adware (4.2%), and trojans that can steal user data or give threat actors remote access to the host machine (3%).

Downloaders take the lion’s share because they can come up clean on internet security scans but fetch riskier payloads at a second stage when the user executes the program.

In many cases, according to Kaspersky, info-stealers, cryptocurrency miners, or both are dropped onto the victim’s computer.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Mysterious ‘Worok’ launches spy effort |
| SOURCE | https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/mysterious-worok-spy-obfuscated-code-private-tools |
| GIST | <p>A relatively new cyber-espionage group is using an intriguing custom arsenal of tools and techniques to compromise companies and governments in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and southern Africa, with attacks aimed at collecting intelligence from targeted organizations.</p> <p>According to an analysis published on Tuesday by cybersecurity firm ESET, the hallmark of the group, which is dubbed Worok, is its use of custom tools not seen in other attacks, a focus on targets in Southeast Asia, and operational similarities to the China-linked TA428 group.</p> <p>In 2020, the group attacked telecommunications companies, government agencies, and maritime firms in the region before taking a months-long break. It restarted operations at the beginning of 2022.</p> |

ESET [issued the advisory](#) on the group because the company's researchers have not seen many of the tools used by any other group, says Thibaut Passilly, a malware researcher with ESET and author of the analysis.

"Worok is a group that uses exclusive and new tools to steal data — their targets are worldwide and include private companies, public entities, as well as governmental institutions," he says. "Their usage of various obfuscation techniques, especially steganography, makes them really unique."

Worok's Custom Toolset

Worok bucks the more recent trend of attackers using cybercriminal services and commodity attack tools as these offerings have blossomed on the Dark Web. The proxy-as-a-service offering EvilProxy, for example, [allows phishing attacks to bypass two-factor authentication methods](#) by capturing and modifying content on the fly. Other groups have specialized in specific services such as [initial access brokers](#), which allow state-sponsored groups and cybercriminals to deliver payloads to already-compromised systems.

Worok's toolset instead consists of an in-house kit. It includes the CLRLoad C++ loader; the PowHeartBeat PowerShell backdoor; and a second-stage C# loader, PNGLoad, that hides code in image files using steganography (although researchers have not yet captured an encoded image).

For command and control, PowHeartBeat currently uses ICMP packets to issue commands to compromised systems, including running commands, saving files, and uploading data.

While the targeting of the malware and the use of some common exploits — such as [the ProxyShell exploit](#), which has been actively used for more than a year — are similar to existing groups, other aspects of the attack are unique, Passilly says.

"We have not seen any code similarity with already known malware for now," he says. "This means they have exclusivity over malicious software, either because they make it themselves or they buy it from a closed source; hence, they have the ability to change and improve their tools. Considering their appetite for stealthiness and their targeting, their activity must be tracked."

Few Links to Other Groups

While the Worok group has aspects that resemble [TA428, a Chinese group](#) that has run cyber-operations against nations in the Asia-Pacific region, the evidence is not strong enough to attribute the attacks to the same group, ESET says. The two groups may share tools and have common goals, but they are distinct enough that their operators are likely different, Passilly says.

"[W]e have observed a few common points with TA428, especially the [usage of ShadowPad](#), similarities in the targeting, and their activity times," he says. "These similarities are not that significant; therefore we link the two groups with low confidence."

For companies, the advisory is a warning that attackers continue to innovate, Passilly says. Companies should track the behavior of cyber-espionage groups to understand when their industry might be targeted by attackers.

"The first and most important rule to protect against cyberattacks is to keep software updated in order to reduce the attack surface, and use multiple layers of protections to prevent intrusions," Passilly says.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 TeslaGun behind new wave cyberattacks |
| SOURCE | https://www.darkreading.com/operations/teslagun-blast-new-wave-backdoor-cyberattacks |
| GIST | A newly discovered cyberattack panel dubbed TeslaGun has been discovered, used by Evil Corp to run ServHelper backdoor campaigns. |

Data gleaned from an analysis by the Prodraft Threat Intelligence (PTI) team shows the Evil Corp ransomware gang (aka TA505 or UNC2165, along with half a dozen other colorful tracking names) has used TeslaGun to carry out mass phishing campaigns and targeted campaigns against more than 8,000 different organizations and individuals. The majority of targets have been in the US, which accounted for more than 3,600 of the victims, with a scattered international distribution outside of that.

There has been a continued expansion of the ServHelper backdoor malware, a long-running and constantly updated package that's been kicking around since at least 2019. It began picking up steam once again in the second half of 2021, according to a [report from Cisco Talos](#), spurred by mechanisms like fake installers and associated installer malware like Raccoon and Amadey.

Most recently, [threat intelligence from Trellix](#) last month reported that the ServHelper backdoor has recently been found dropping hidden cryptominers on systems.

[The PTI report](#), issued Tuesday, delves into the technical specifics behind TeslaGun, and offers some details and tips that can help enterprises move forward with important countermeasures to some of the prevailing backdoor cyberattack trends today.

Backdoor attacks that circumvent authentication mechanisms and quietly establish persistence on enterprise systems are some of the most disconcerting for cybersecurity defenders. That's because these attacks are notoriously difficult to detect or prevent with standard security controls.

Backdoor Attackers Diversify Their Attack Assets

PTI researchers said they observed a wide range of different victim profiles and campaigns during their investigations, supporting previous research that showed ServHelper attacks are trawling for victims in a variety of simultaneous campaigns. This is a trademark attack pattern of casting a wide net for opportunistic hits.

"A single instance of the TeslaGun control panel contains multiple campaign records representing different delivery methods and attack data," the report explained. "Newer versions of the malware encode these different campaigns as campaign IDs."

But Cyberattackers Will Actively Profile Victims

At the same time, TeslaGun contains plenty of evidence that attackers are profiling victims, taking copious notes at some points, and conducting targeted backdoor attacks.

"The PTI team observed that the main dashboard of the TeslaGun panel includes comments attached to victim records. These records show victim device data such as CPU, GPU, RAM size and internet connection speed," the report said, explaining this indicates targeting for cryptomining opportunities. "On the other hand, according to victim comments, it is clear that TA505 is actively looking for online banking or retail users, including crypto-wallets and e-commerce accounts."

The report said that most victims appear to operate in the financial sector but that this targeting is not exclusive.

Resale Is an Important Part of Backdoor Monetization

The way that the control panel's user options are set up offered researchers a lot of information about the group's "workflow and commercial strategy," the report said. For example, some filtering options were labeled "Sell" and "Sell 2" with victims in these groups having remote desktop protocols (RDP) temporarily disabled through the panel.

"This probably means that TA505 can not immediately earn a profit from exploiting those particular victims," according to the report. "Instead of letting them go, the group has tagged those victim's RDP connections for the resale to other cybercriminals."

The PTI report said that based on the researchers' observations, the group's internal structure was "surprisingly disorganized" but that its members still "carefully monitor their victims and can demonstrate remarkable patience, especially with high-value victims in the finance sector."

The analysis further notes that the strength of the group is its agility, which makes it hard to predict activity and detect over time.

Nevertheless, the backdoor attackers aren't perfect, and this can offer some clues for cybersecurity pros looking to thwart their efforts.

"The group does exhibit some telltale weaknesses, however. While TA505 can maintain hidden connections on victims' devices for months, its members are often unusually noisy," the report said. "After installing ServHelper, TA505 threat actors may manually connect to victim devices through RDP tunneling. Security technologies capable of detecting these tunnels may prove vital for catching and mitigating TA505's backdoor attacks."

The Russian-linked (and sanctioned) Evil Corp has been one of the most prolific groups of the last five years. According to the [US government](#), the group is the brain trust behind the financial Trojan Dridex and has associations with campaigns using ransomware variants like WastedLocker. It continues to hone a raft of weapons for its arsenal as well; last week, it came to light that it's associated with [Raspberry Robin infections](#).

PTI uses TA505 to track the threat, and [consensus is solid](#) but not universal that TA505 and Evil Corp are the same group. A report last month from the [Health Sector Cybersecurity Coordination Center \(HC3\)](#) said it "does not currently support that conclusion."

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Stealthy malware targets Linux systems |
| SOURCE | https://cybersecurity.att.com/blogs/labs-research/shikitega-new-stealthy-malware-targeting-linux?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>Executive summary</p> <p>AT&T Alien Labs has discovered a new malware targeting endpoints and IoT devices that are running Linux operating systems. Shikitega is delivered in a multistage infection chain where each module responds to a part of the payload and downloads and executes the next one. An attacker can gain full control of the system, in addition to the cryptocurrency miner that will be executed and set to persist.</p> <p>Key takeaways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The malware downloads and executes the Metasploit's "Mettle" meterpreter to maximize its control on infected machines.• Shikitega exploits system vulnerabilities to gain high privileges, persist and execute crypto miner.• The malware uses a polymorphic encoder to make it more difficult to detect by anti-virus engines.• Shikitega abuse legitimate cloud services to store some of its command and control servers (C&C). <p>Background</p> <p>With a rise of nearly 650% in malware and ransomware for Linux this year, reaching an all-time high in the first half year of 2022, threat actors find servers, endpoints and IoT devices based on Linux operating systems more and more valuable and find new ways to deliver their malicious payloads. New malwares like BotenaGo and EnemyBot are examples of how malware writers rapidly incorporate recently discovered vulnerabilities to find new victims and increase their reach.</p> <p>Shikitega uses an infection chain in multiple layers, where the first one contains only a few hundred bytes, and each module is responsible for a specific task, from downloading and executing Metasploit meterpreter, exploiting Linux vulnerabilities, setting persistence in the infected machine to downloading and executing a cryptominer.</p> |

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| | <p>Conclusion</p> <p>Threat actors continue to search for ways to deliver malware in new ways to stay under the radar and avoid detection. Shiketega malware is delivered in a sophisticated way, it uses a polymorphic encoder, and it gradually delivers its payload where each step reveals only part of the total payload. In addition, the malware abuses known hosting services to host its command and control servers. Stay safe!</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/05 Russian-speaking cyber crooks feel pinch |
| SOURCE | https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252524585/Russian-speaking-cyber-criminals-feel-economic-pinch?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>Russian-speaking cyber criminals face diminishing financial returns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with many scams becoming redundant almost overnight due to sanctions and increased scrutiny of Russian entities, say Digital Shadows researchers.</p> <p>Based on anecdotal feedback posted by Russian-speaking cyber criminals to an undisclosed forum, Digital Shadows' Photon Research Team said the financial success of cyber criminals often comes in peaks and troughs.</p> <p>This is because although threat actors are able to make a consistent profit through schemes that work for a time, the method in use will eventually become redundant, forcing them to spend time and resources to identify new approaches.</p> <p>"Always in jumps, some scheme works, you are able to milk it, then the method dies and again you search for another, study it, it takes a very long time," said one user, according to a screengrab shared with Computer Weekly.</p> <p>Digital Shadows added that, following Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which has prompted sanctions and additional scrutiny on all cyber activity originating from Russian entities, many cyber criminals are having to refine and adapt their techniques "to climb out of that trough" again.</p> <p>"A good example of this is the use of GooglePay and other financial technologies becoming banned for use across Russia. This led to many scams becoming redundant almost overnight," said Digital Shadows researchers in a blog post, published on 1 September 2022.</p> <p>The researchers added that, according to another user on the forum, cyber criminals were able to earn as much as they liked before the conflict, but had subsequently lost their ability to successfully conduct "shadow" work.</p> <p>"In principle, I earned as much as I needed until the special military operation began. I lost my shadow job, and there are only [RUB] 30,000 left in my QIWI wallet and \$80 in bitcoin," wrote the user.</p> <p>The researchers further added that, for those still able to find shadow work, the prices they can charge have drastically diminished. One user, for example, suggested that prior to the conflict, a threat actor could typically earn \$500 for providing initial access to a targeted network.</p> <p>"Within the context of the conversation, it appears the user was suggesting prices had significantly dropped since that time," wrote the researchers. "We've written numerous times about the rise of initial access brokers (IAB) and how this type of threat actor has greatly assisted cyber crime, however it's possible that the market has become oversaturated with IABs, and prices lowered as a result."</p> <p>The lack of current earnings was reiterated by other users, who suggested that alternative methods had not worked, and they were "tired of living in poverty".</p> |

However, the researchers noted that although the current economic and geopolitical situation has stifled the earning capacity of Russian threat actors, it is likely to be a short-term hindrance. “Many types of cyber crime, including ransomware and account takeover, have thrived in the last year, and that will almost certainly continue as we enter the final quarter of 2022,” they wrote.

They added that there had, however, been a reduction in carding activity – a form of credit card fraud where stolen credit cards are used to charge prepaid cards – although it is difficult to tell if the decline is the result of raids conducted by Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) earlier in 2022, or a general change in cyber criminal sentiment towards such schemes.

“We identified during recent deployments that the sentiment among some cyber criminals was that carding was a diminishing art form, which was becoming increasingly difficult to make regular returns from,” said the researchers.

“Some users expressed concerns of the difficulties in receiving up-to-date information over carding activities on forums, while another suggested that they deliberately did not post carding-related information to prevent competitors from gaining an advantage.”

Because carding is often done by those on the lower end of the cyber criminal spectrum without much technical expertise, the researchers said it may be harder for budding cyber criminals to establish themselves if they are unable to use the method as a way of building up a sustainable income.

Alternatively, the researchers posited that the increasing difficulty of carding meant cyber criminals had simply moved on to more profitable endeavours, such as ransomware.

In May 2022, Verizon’s Threat Research Advisory Centre (VTRAC) and 80 other independent industry contributors [observed a 13% increase in ransomware breaches in 2021](#), a year-on-year jump greater than the past five years combined.

According to [separate information](#) published by the Photon Research Team in August 2022, a new cyber criminal forum has been established that solely and explicitly targets victims in Russia and Belarus.

Known as Dumps, the forum has a small membership of around 100 individuals, and contains sections offering cyber attacks as a service, data leaks, illicit materials, carding support, malware and access to compromised networks.

The Photon team said that while Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has been condemned around the world, the conflict has proven [very divisive in the cyber criminal community](#).

“Opinions on Russian president Vladimir Putin’s so-called ‘special military operation’ depend on several factors, notably the cyber criminal’s background, political beliefs or other nationalistic drivers,” [they](#) wrote.

“As we’ve reported in previous blogs, some internet users have taken it on [themselves to take an active role in the conflict](#), targeting Russian organisations with targeted data breaches, distributed denial of service [DDoS] attacks and defacement activity.”

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 ‘Play’ ransomware attacks similar to Hive |
| SOURCE | https://www.trendmicro.com/en_us/research/22/i/play-ransomware-s-attack-playbook-unmasks-it-as-another-hive-aff.html?&web_view=true |
| GIST | In July, we investigated a spate of ransomware cases in the Latin American region that targeted government entities, which was initially attributed to a new player known as Play ransomware. This ransomware’s name was derived from its behavior, as it adds the extension “.play” after encrypting files. Its ransom note also contains the single word, “PLAY,” and the ransomware group’s contact email address.... Victims of |

this ransomware first surfaced in [Bleeping Computer forums](#) in June 2022. A month later, more details about Play ransomware were published on the "[No-logs No breach](#)" website.

Further analysis of these ransomware infections, however, revealed that Play uses many tactics that follow the playbook of both Hive and Nokoyawa ransomware...including similarities in the file names and file paths of their respective tools and payloads. Earlier this year, we found evidence that suggests that the [attackers behind Nokayawa are related to those behind Hive](#), owing to the many similarities between their attack chains.

Related Malware Campaigns

Though not all of the Play ransomware infections that we analyzed shared malware indicators with that of Hive and Nokoyawa ransomware, their many shared tactics and tools suggest a high probability of affiliation between these ransomware families. This ransomware merits further investigation, and we plan on validating the related URLs from Play ransomware infections in terms of watermarking. This is to determine whether these were indeed related to any Hive infections in the past, as was done previously with Nokoyawa infections.

Additionally, we have found evidence that points to a possible connection between Play ransomware and [Quantum ransomware](#), which is an offshoot of the notorious [Conti ransomware group](#). The Cobalt Strike beacons that were used in Play's attacks bear the same watermark, 206546002, as those previously dropped by Emotet and SVCReady botnets that have also been observed in Quantum ransomware attacks. This suggests that the two ransomware groups share some of the same infrastructure.

During our investigation, we found indicators of a good chance of an Emotet infection. Though there are currently no spam campaigns using the Emotet trojan, we did detect a few cases of Emotet being used to deploy Cobalt Strike beacons bearing the same 206546002 watermark that was found in beacons involved in Play's ransomware attacks.

Infection Distribution

Like Hive and Nokoyawa ransomware, most of Play ransomware's attacks affected organizations located in the Latin American region, with Brazil topping the list. Organizations in Argentina, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, and Spain also experienced Play attacks.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 US seizes WT1SHOP criminal marketplace |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-seizes-wt1shop-market-selling-credit-cards-credentials-and-ids/?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>An international law enforcement operation has seized the website and domains for WT1SHOP, a criminal marketplace that sold stolen credit cards, I.D. cards, and millions of login credentials.</p> <p>WT1SHOP was one of the largest criminal marketplaces of PII data commonly used by threat actors to buy credentials for account takeovers, credit cards used for online purchases, and government I.D. cards for identity theft.</p> <p>"The WT1shop was one of the turnkey account shop selling compromised accounts and personally identifiable information since the Slipstream takedown," AdvIntel CEO Vitali Kremetz told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"It catered primarily to the carders and fraudsters focused on account takeover activity and offering its service on many underground crime communities."</p> <p>The representatives of WT1SHOP commonly promoted the marketplace on Russian hacking forums and Reddits that catered to online criminal activity.</p> <p>Servers and domains seized by law enforcement</p> |

Today, the Department of Justice announced that Portuguese authorities seized the WT1SHOP website, and the U.S. seized four Internet domains used to access the criminal marketplace, including wt1shop.net, wt1store.cc, wt1store.com, and wt1store.net.

Other domains used by the website are wt1store.biz, wt1store.me, wt1store.xyz, and wt1store.org, which do not appear to be seized now. However, as the website is seized, visiting any of these domains no longer allows access to the store.

The operation was conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office of the District of Maryland and the FBI, who said the site sold the personal information of millions of users, including stolen login credentials, bank accounts, credit cards, and scanned government identification, such as passports and driver's licenses.

"Law enforcement's review of WT1SHOP in December 2021 showed that the number of users and sellers on the website had increased to approximately 106,273 users and 94 sellers with a total of approximately 5.85 million credentials available for sale," reads the [DOJ announcement](#).

The Dutch police estimated in June 2020 that the site had \$4 million in sales paid in bitcoin.

The DOJ announcement says law enforcement traced the bitcoin payments, email addresses, and admin accounts for WT1SHOP back to Nicolai Colesnicov, age 36, of the Republic of Moldova. Colesnicov is suspected to be the administrator and operator of the criminal marketplace.

Colesnicov is charged with conspiracy and trafficking in unauthorized access devices and faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in federal prison if found guilty.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 China sites digital fingerprint screenshots |
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| SOURCE | https://www.vice.com/en/article/qjk3vm/chinese-social-media-watermarks-zhihu-douban |
| GIST | <p>Sharing screenshots of sensitive content in China has just become more risky.</p> <p>More Chinese social media services are putting hidden watermarks on screenshots that make the images traceable no matter where they are shared, a feature that an analyst said could prevent the spread of censored content.</p> <p>Some Chinese internet users recently discovered the covert watermarks on screenshots taken on Zhihu, a question-and-answer site similar to Quora. By tweaking the colors of the screenshots, the users found strings of numbers plastered across the page. Some suspect it is information that could be used to identify who took the screenshots.</p> <p>It follows the example of Douban, an online forum that introduced a similar feature in February. The platform allows administrators of message groups to opt in to the feature, which embeds subtle watermarks in screenshots that contain information of who took the screenshot and its origin, ostensibly to prevent users from lifting others' content.</p> <p>But Eric Liu, an analyst tracking Chinese censorship for the U.S.-based <i>China Digital Times</i>, said Chinese social media companies are using such techniques, called steganography, to trace sensitive content to their source and block accounts that share the information on banned foreign platforms.</p> <p>"It's a method to stop censored content from spreading," Liu told VICE World News. "If censored content goes viral on social media beyond the firewall, it would put immense pressure on domestic platforms."</p> <p>Zhihu did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> |

Digital watermarking has for years been used for purposes such as copyright protection and video authentication, and could come in the form of hidden messages or imperceptibly altered pixels. As early as 1997, [Playboy](#) considered putting digital marks on its photos to track pirated copies on the internet.

[Many office printers](#) also put tracking codes, invisible to the naked eye, on printed documents that associate them with the printer's serial number. This is how the U.S. National Security Agency in 2017 [identified a contractor](#) who leaked classified documents to *The Intercept*, which posted photos of the documents online.

The introduction of hidden watermarks comes as China further tightens its control over the internet and squelches online dissent. China has strictly required all internet users to register with their real names since 2017. Many social media platforms, which are tasked with censorship, require users to verify their identities with biometric features such as facial recognition.

While most foreign social media sites, including Twitter and Facebook, are blocked by China's firewall, authorities have sought to track down residents that criticize the Chinese government on these platforms. At least 2,300 residents in China have been punished and even sentenced to jail for their online remarks, including tweets, according to [a crowd-sourced database](#).

More recently, Beijing was outraged by [an emerging online campaign](#) to take screenshots on Chinese social media and translate them that highlights rising nationalism in the country on Twitter and Reddit.

State outlets have accused the campaign, dubbed the Great Translation Movement, of smearing the country by cherry picking the most extreme sentiments. Some users suggested the hidden watermarks are introduced to catch the volunteer translators.

Zhihu's feature, which was first noted by users on Sunday, appears to have been rolled back by Tuesday.

But many Zhihu users were not relieved. "The space for discussion within the domestic internet has never been this dire, a slight offense could get your post deleted, your account suspended and result in a trip to the police station," one user wrote in a thread discussing the new feature. "It is why more refugees are gathering on foreign platforms, where they can speak relatively freely. But this makes those who want to impose control uncomfortable."

"I guess other domestic platforms would soon follow suit," they added.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 State Dept. big rewards for hackers info |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/09/06/state-department-is-offering-big-rewards-info-hackers-uncertain-ends/ |
| GIST | <p>Behind the curtains of a State Department program offering millions of dollars for tips</p> <p>In the past two months alone, a State Department program has offered tens of millions of dollars for information on Conti ransomware gang members and alleged Russian election meddlers.</p> <p>And that State Department "Rewards for Justice" initiative is set to advertise new targets between now and the 2022 midterm elections, officials told me, speaking on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of their work.</p> <p>Rewards for Justice, which is housed within the Diplomatic Security Service and has for decades focused primarily on countering terrorism, expanded in 2020 to start going after election interference and hacking of U.S. critical infrastructure.</p> |

But Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) officials wouldn't say whether anyone has cashed in on those post-2020 rewards, citing the need to protect sources. One Capitol Hill aide, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they aren't authorized to speak publicly, told me that they're "not aware of any major success stories" related to hacking and election security.

That might just be a matter of lag time. It can take months or even years, DSS officials said, to reap the best tips. **And while some doubt the program's ability to help chase down hackers or election meddlers**, many still think Rewards for Justice can help in other ways.

- "The way to judge it isn't how many people we catch," **James Lewis**, a cybersecurity expert at the Center for Security and International Studies who once served at the State Department, told me. "It's how much we get the message out there. ... As part of a larger U.S. effort to finally begin to impose consequences, it's a good thing."

The program

The State Department says that Rewards for Justice has paid out \$250 million to more than 125 people since its inception in 1984 and has highlighted [a select few success stories](#) on its website. Congress has, in recent years, authorized the program to move into election security and cybersecurity. (It's not the only program to offer rewards for information about illicit hacking, or even [the only program in the State Department](#) to do so.)

But the program hasn't always proven successful. It had trouble getting tips on al-Qaeda in the early 2000s, [as The Post reported in 2008](#).

Two DSS officials spoke with me about the inner workings of the program. Analysts evaluate tips for useful information, possibly contacting the source for clarification, then pass good tips along to others in U.S. intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies to handle the cases. Approximately 90 percent of the tips are "unusable trash," and just 2 to 4 percent of what comes in "may be useful," one official said. It won't say much about the tipsters otherwise.

"Foreign governments ... can be very dangerous to the tipster, so we don't like to talk about what comes in," the official said.

The evolution

Since 2008, the program has improved its outreach with technology, one of the officials told me. **What once was just a 1-800 line, an email address and an online form has expanded to include tip lines on the dark web, Signal, WhatsApp and more.**

"We've seen quite an uptick in the quality of things coming in because we make it easier and more secure," the official said.

While the officials said there's been a learning curve about how they market the program to get tips on hackers and election meddlers, they've embraced the power and reach of social media.

[The August reward offer](#) for Conti was the first time the U.S. government publicized a picture of a suspected Conti hacker, and the Rewards for Justice Twitter account playfully mocked them.

[July's offer](#) focused on Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a Russian oligarch and confidant to Russian President **Vladimir Putin** who the United States [accused](#) of funding a troll farm that tried to interfere in U.S. elections. Prigozhin mocked the reward online, leading to more social media jousting.

Rewards for Justice announced the Conti reward at the Black Hat cybersecurity conference in Las Vegas. They've also been offering to pay the rewards with cryptocurrency. So far they've also used the program to offer rewards for information on North Korean hackers and the hackers behind last summer's Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack, among others.

The differences

The Capitol Hill aide who said they weren't aware of any major success stories added, "That's not disqualifying."

"By soliciting information, maybe someone provides a tip that isn't itself extraordinary, but that when combined with all the other information that we're receiving and trying to piece together, may be very helpful in that sense," the aide said.

Still, there are some difficulties with using the program for cyberspace targets.

"You're tapping into a reservoir of people who may have no special love for the terrorists but also are maybe familiar with who the terrorists are, whereas cybercriminals are, generally speaking, not as notorious," the aide said. "On top of that, they're much better able to protect their identities."

In a world where [some hackers are making hundreds of millions of dollars at a time](#), there's also the question of who would turn them in at all. That said, it's not unheard of for hackers to turn on each other, **Andrew Lohn**, a senior fellow at Georgetown's Center for Security and Emerging Technology, told me.

Said one of the DSS officials: "Maybe the key leaders within that group earn hundreds of millions of dollars, but there could be friends and associates around them who aren't earning that money or are jealous of the people earning the big dollars, and \$10 million might be a good incentive for them."

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Hackers target US 2 nd largest school district |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/06/los-angeles-unified-school-district-cyber-attack |
| GIST | <p>Hackers targeted the second-largest school district in the US with a cyber-attack over Labor Day weekend, officials at Los Angeles unified school district have confirmed.</p> <p>The district characterized the cyber-attack as a "significant disruption to our system's infrastructure" but officials said they did not expect major problems with teaching or such services as transportation and food. It said business operations might be delayed or modified.</p> <p>Classes were scheduled to take place as usual Tuesday morning, the district – which includes more than 600,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade – said in a statement.</p> <p>"Since the identification of the incident, which is likely criminal in nature, we continue to assess the situation with law enforcement agencies," the district said, adding that a "response protocol" was implemented to mitigate districtwide disruptions, including access to email, computer systems and applications.</p> <p>The perpetrators appear to have targeted the facilities systems, which involves information about private-sector contractor payments which are publicly available through records requests rather than confidential details like payroll, health and other data, officials said.</p> <p>Authorities believe the attack originated internationally and have identified three potential countries where it may have come from, though Los Angeles Unified Superintendent Alberto Carvalho would not say which countries may be involved.</p> <p>The district said the investigation and response involved the White House, the US Department of Education, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.</p> <p>The attack comes as ransomware is on the rise, targeting the education sector at higher rates than it had been before. In August and September 2021, 57% of ransomware incidents reported to the FBI involved K-12 schools compared to 28% of incidents from January through July.</p> |

In 2021 56% of K-12 schools and 64% of higher education organizations surveyed by digital security firm Sophos reported being hit by some type of ransomware.

“This egregious cyber-attack is the latest example of the pervasive threat that predatory cybercriminals pose to everyone from multinational businesses to young schoolchildren,” said Darren Guccione, CEO and co-founder of the cybersecurity firm [Keeper Security](#). “No one is safe from cybercrime and often the most vulnerable among us are the most likely to be targeted.”

The increase has come as the Covid pandemic forced much of the education sector online, while schools struggle to keep up security practices. In an advisory to schools released in 2021, the FBI suggested more training of employees to monitor networks for suspicious activities.

Schools are an attractive target for hackers for a variety of reasons, said Matthew Warner, co-founder and chief technology officer at the cybersecurity firm [Blumira](#). Schools often lack of funding for full-time IT staff, and many students use their own, unsecured devices, giving hackers more opportunities to breach networks.

“Most IT leaders in education operate on a shoestring budget,” he said. “Plus, lower budgets in education make it difficult to hire and retain cybersecurity talent without a competitive salary to offer.”

A ransomware extortion attack in the biggest school district in Albuquerque’s, New Mexico, forced schools to close for two days in January.

The FBI suggests schools not paying ransoms, but 45% of K-12 victims and 50% in higher education reported paying the ransom to reinstate lost data.

It is not clear if LAUSD paid the ransom in this attack, but the district is calling for an independent taskforce to help prevent future attacks.

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Terrorism, Extremism

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Militants attack Yemen security post |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/official-militants-ambush-security-post-in-yemen-14-killed/2022/09/06/3709dce8-2de2-11ed-bcc6-0874b26ae296_story.html |
| GIST | <p>CAIRO — Suspected al-Qaida militants on Tuesday attacked a security post in southern Yemen, sparking clashes that killed at least 21 troops and six militants, military officials said.</p> <p>The early morning attack in Ahwar, in the province of Abyan, targeted a post manned by troops from the Security Belt, a security force loyal to the secessionist Southern Transitional Council.</p> <p>The separatist council is backed by the United Arab Emirates and controls much of Yemen’s south. It is at odds with the internationally recognized government.</p> <p>The officials said at least 21 troops were killed in the attack and the clashes that ensures for hours. Four more troops were also wounded, they said.</p> <p>The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media.</p> <p>Among the dead troops was Yasser Nasser Shaea, a senior commander in the force fighting terror groups in Yemen, the Security Belt said in a statement.</p> |

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| | <p>It said six militants were killed and others were detained. It posted images showing bodies it said were the dead militants.</p> <p>No group claimed responsibility for the ambush. But it bore the hallmarks of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP.</p> <p>AQAP has long been considered the global network's most dangerous branch, and has attempted to carry out attacks on the U.S. mainland.</p> <p>AQAP, along with an affiliate of the Islamic State group, are active in several regions of Yemen and have taken advantage of the yearslong civil war to make inroads.</p> <p>Yemen's war pits Iran-backed Houthi rebels against the internationally recognized government, which is aided by a Saudi-led coalition. The UAE is part of the coalition.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/07 'Boogaloo Bois' back on Facebook |
| SOURCE | https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/09/07/boogaloo-bois-what-ideology-means-and-why-its-back-facebook/8003317001/ |
| GIST | <p>Accounts, pages and groups connected to the violent extremist movement the "Boogaloo Bois" are resurfacing on Facebook, despite the platform vowing to remove references to the movement more than two years ago.</p> <p>A new report by the Tech Transparency Project, provided exclusively to USA TODAY, details several Boogaloo-affiliated groups and pages, including one group with more than 4,000 members, popping up on Facebook in recent weeks.</p> <p>The meme-focused Boogaloo movement, which has at its core a deep distrust and hatred of the federal government, has been tied to dozens of arrests and at least two fatal attacks on police, but the ideology seemed to fade in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection last year.</p> <p>Its resurgence now appears to be connected to the search of former President Donald Trump's Florida home Mar-a-Lago, and the ensuing vitriol toward the federal government, said Katie Paul, director of the Tech Transparency Project, a nonprofit watchdog group that monitors large tech companies.</p> <p>Paul, who has tracked Boogaloo activity on social media since its inception, said the movement thrives on events that spur civil disobedience and animosity towards the government.</p> <p>The movement flourished during the anti-lockdown movement at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Paul said. It flared up again after the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests. And now, as Trump and his supporters post on social media about conspiracy theories and threats against the federal government are spiking, the Boogaloo meme machine is revving up again.</p> <p>"Any attempt to subvert authority they see as an opportunity to recruit for their movement," Paul said. "Now we see, once again, another major movement that involves a lot of anger toward authorities and real-world attacks — and it's yet another opportunity for the movement to capitalize on."</p> <p>An ideology born from a meme</p> <p>Even for experts in extremism the "Boogaloo," "Boogaloo Boy" or "Boogaloo Boi" movement has always been tough to accurately describe.</p> <p>Essentially, it's a leaderless, mainly online phenomenon, driven by a heavy emphasis on specific memes, iconography and in-jokes. Central to the movement is an anti-federal government ideology, an anticipation of a second civil war and an obsession with firearms.</p> |

Perhaps the most visible example of Boogaloo iconography is the Hawaiian shirts some adherents to the movement wear to protests like the annual pro-Second Amendment rally in Richmond, Virginia, which attracts thousands of armed protesters.

In an attempt to avoid detection on social media, Boogaloo adherents often use coded language. Examples include "Big Igloo" or "Big Luau" in place of Boogaloo. The "Big Luau" term is the origin of the Hawaiian shirt motif.

Other easily recognizable memes used by the movement include the "Boogaloo flag," which depicts an image of an igloo, and sometimes a palm tree, with black-and-white stripes mirroring the American flag. In a poke at the pro-law-enforcement "thin blue line" flag, one of the strips in the Boogaloo flag has a Hawaiian shirt pattern.

The "Boogaloo" reference itself emerged from a meme popular on 4chan which was meant to denote "any kind of sequel or subsequent installment in a series," according to the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#). The meme eventually evolved into "Civil War 2: Electric Boogaloo," a play on the 1984 film "Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo."

The in-jokes turned sour through 2020 and 2021 as several Boogaloo-affiliated groups were arrested and charged with charges ranging from [conspiracy](#) to [terrorism](#).

In May 2020, Air Force Sergeant Steven Carrillo shot and killed a federal officer guarding the U.S. Courthouse in Oakland, California. E days later, after a manhunt, Carrillo also killed a local deputy during a shootout in California's Santa Cruz Mountains. During that attack he scrawled phrases tied to the Boogaloo movement in his own blood on the hood of a car he allegedly hijacked.

This recent resurgence is taking place on what Paul says is the Boogaloos' favorite platform: Facebook.

Facebook pages and groups growing

The Tech Transparency Project found an upsurge in pages and groups using Boogaloo iconography since early August.

One such group, Bigaloo Bogaloo, had more than 4,000 members as of Tuesday afternoon. The group, launched in April, saw a flood of new members in the last two weeks, adding more than 700 new members from Aug. 25 to Sept. 6 according to the Tech Transparency Project.

That might not sound like a lot of people, but for a Facebook group operating in a clandestine way and trying to avoid detection, it's a significant presence, said Megan Squire, a research fellow with the Southern Poverty Law Center who has tracked extremists online for years.

"I would report a group with four members," Squire said. "None of this should be out there. Anyone could stumble on this stuff, especially with a keyword or a suggestion from the algorithm."

Paul said the Boogaloo movement has always preferred Facebook to newer social media sites that may be more open to extremist content like Gab or Trump's Truth Social. She cited a recent post on one Boogaloo group that reads: "people rather do blood oaths than move to Gab."

But maintaining a presence on the world's largest social media site requires avoiding the social media giant's detection.

Flourishing despite a ban on Facebook

In June 2020, after the Carrillo shootings, Facebook [officially banned](#) members of the Boogaloo movement who "actively seek to commit violence." The Boogaloo movement also appeared on an [internal Facebook list](#) of "dangerous individuals and organizations" obtained by The Intercept last year. (The document also notes that only a subset of the movement is banned.)

The Boogaloo groups and pages identified by the Tech Transparency Project include examples of people sharing violent memes directed at the federal government. Posters share conspiracy theories and spread Hawaiian-shirt-themed propaganda. Group members also share bomb-making information and post threats directed at the federal government.

It's exactly the subset of the Boogaloo movement that is supposed to be banned on Facebook, Paul said.

The Boogaloo pages, groups and accounts have been able to flourish on Facebook despite the company's assurances it is doing all it can to keep extremists from using the platform.

A Meta spokesperson sent USA TODAY a written statement, including: "We continue investing heavily in people, technology, research and partnerships to counter extremist activity and keep people and communities safe. This is an adversarial space, with perpetrators constantly trying to find new ways to evade our policies, which is why we work with a number of organizations to flag content and stay ahead of evolving trends."

Facebook's parent company Meta, which has a current market capitalization of \$426 billion, did not elaborate on how it monitors the the simple semantic tweaks Boogaloo adherents regularly use to avoid detection. By contrast, small organizations like the Tech Transparency Project can quickly and simply spot those changes.

The "Bigaloo Bogaloo" group is a good example. The group's 4,000 members were able to find and join a group devoted to the Boogaloo ideology, despite some minor spelling "camouflage" in its title.

This sort of semantic subterfuge is exactly why social media companies like Facebook need a devoted team of researchers that can track extremist movements as they grow organically, said the SPLC's Squire, who is also a computer scientist.

"The landscape changes too quickly," Squire said. "You cannot substitute an algorithm for expertise, you just can't."

"And I'm saying that as a person who was a computer scientist trained to literally make algorithms," Squire added. "I realized that what I was trying to do in an automated fashion would never work, at least not in my lifetime, so I had to become an expert."

The Meta statement also criticized out the Tech Transparency Project for not sharing its findings with the company before publishing its report.

"If TTP were really interested in keeping this kind of violent content off of the internet, they'd share their research with us rather than just trying to generate headlines," the statement reads.

But Paul also pointed out that despite years of identifying violent extremist content on Facebook, the social media giant has never once reached out to the Tech Transparency Project for help. She echoed other researchers who said it's difficult to know how to reach out to Facebook to offer to help identify or to flag troublesome groups.

"Nor should it be on researchers or journalists to clean up the world's most profitable social media platform," Paul said. "They should be investing those profits in doing it effectively."

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Extremist posts online from hyper-posters? |
| SOURCE | https://studyfinds.org/extremist-posts-online/ |
| GIST | EXETER, United Kingdom — The concerning rise of online extremism over the past decade would lead many to believe more and more people are participating in this trend. However, researchers from the University of Exeter suggest that these seemingly sizable online communities may not be as active as they |

appear. Their study finds most of the posts on extremist forums actually originate from a much smaller collection of especially committed members.

Moreover, after analyzing these forums for a number of years, researchers say the chatrooms appear to always follow identical participation structures. According to the report, a very small “clique” of “hyper-posters” may be responsible for up to a third of all posts, supported by a slightly bigger second-tier of “super-posters” who are committed but tend to show more restraint. “Normo-posters” chime in every so often, while “hypo-posters,” or people who have only posted once or twice, make up the largest portion of users.

Study authors make a point to clarify that hyper-posters aren’t necessarily the most senior, central, or connected members of [an extremist forum](#). In some cases, significantly fewer active posters also occupy central influential positions in discussions held on these forums. That said, hypo-posters do tend to reside on the periphery of the network, only engaging in one or a handful of discussions.

‘Extremist forums are hierarchical echo-chambers’

“Anecdotal evidence from existing case-studies already pointed to similarities in posting structure, so we anticipated to find it. However, what we didn’t expect to see was such a low level of diversity – if you put all the graphs and metrics side by side, they are hardly distinguishable,” says study co-author Professor Stephane Baele in a [university release](#).

“These results not only clarify how influence works in extremist online spaces, they also deliver actionable intelligence for government agencies tasked with tackling online [extremism and radicalization](#). As the rapid growth and diversification of extremist online spaces causes serious challenges to security and law-enforcement practitioners, this type of knowledge – which offers both general and granular observations – is directly useful.”

Notably, these findings held up across a number of [different ideologies](#) (far-right, salafi-jihadist, Incel), languages (English, French, Arabic, German), and forum sizes. The research team analyzed an astounding 12,569,639 unique posts across eight far-right, seven Salafi-jihadist, and two Incel forums to reach these conclusions.

“We found in all forums there was a small clique of extremely active posters who occupy central roles in discussions. Extremist forums are hierarchical [echo-chambers](#),” study co-author Dr. Lewys Brace concludes. “Having this more fine-grained categorical structure of user behavior will allow for more focused intervention measures such as targeted undercover posting strategies or better allocation of scarce resources for investigating specific users.”

The [study](#) is published in the *Journal of Policing Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*.

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| HEADLINE | 09/07 Leaked membership rolls of Oath Keepers |
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| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/elected-officials-police-chiefs-on-leaked-oath-keepers-list/ |
| GIST | <p>The names of hundreds of U.S. law enforcement officers, elected officials and military members appear on the leaked membership rolls of a far-right extremist group that’s accused of playing a key role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, according to a report released Wednesday.</p> <p>The Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism pored over more than 38,000 names on leaked Oath Keepers membership lists and identified more than 370 people it believes currently work in law enforcement agencies — including as police chiefs and sheriffs — and more than 100 people who are currently members of the military.</p> |

It also identified more than 80 people who were running for or served in public office as of early August. The membership information was compiled into a database published by the transparency collective Distributed Denial of Secrets.

The data raises fresh concerns about the presence of extremists in law enforcement and the military who are tasked with enforcing laws and protecting the U.S. It's especially problematic for public servants to be associated with extremists at a time when lies about the 2020 election are fueling threats of violence against lawmakers and institutions.

"Even for those who claimed to have left the organization when it began to employ more aggressive tactics in 2014, it is important to remember that the Oath Keepers have espoused extremism since their founding, and this fact was not enough to deter these individuals from signing up," the report says.

Appearing in the Oath Keepers' database doesn't prove that a person was ever an active member of the group or shares its ideology. Some people on the list contacted by The Associated Press said they were briefly members years ago and are no longer affiliated with the group. Some said they were never dues-paying members.

"Their views are far too extreme for me," said Shawn Mobley, sheriff of Otero County, Colorado. Mobley told the AP in an email that he distanced himself from the Oath Keepers years ago over concerns about its involvement in the standoff against the federal government at Bundy Ranch in Bunkerville, Nevada, among other things.

The Oath Keepers, founded in 2009 by Stewart Rhodes, is a loosely organized conspiracy theory-fueled group that recruits current and former military, police and first responders. It asks its members to vow to defend the Constitution "against all enemies, foreign and domestic," promotes the belief that the federal government is out to strip citizens of their civil liberties and paints its followers as defenders against tyranny.

More than two dozen people associated with the Oath Keepers — including Rhodes — have been charged in connection with the Jan. 6 attack. Rhodes and four other Oath Keeper members or associates are heading to trial this month on seditious conspiracy charges for what prosecutors have described as a weekslong plot to keep then-President Donald Trump in power. Rhodes and the other Oath Keepers say that they are innocent and that there was no plan to attack the Capitol.

The Oath Keepers has grown quickly along with the wider anti-government movement and used the tools of the internet to spread their message during Barack Obama's presidency, said Rachel Carroll Rivas, interim deputy director of research with the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project. But since Jan. 6 and Rhodes' arrest, the group has struggled to keep members, she said.

That's partly because Oath Keepers had been associated so strongly with Rhodes that the removal of the central figure had an outsized impact, and partly because many associated with the group were often those who wanted to be considered respectable in their communities, she said.

"The image of being associated with Jan. 6 was too much for many of those folks," she said.

Among the elected officials whose name appears on the membership lists is South Dakota state Rep. Phil Jensen, who won a June Republican primary in his bid for reelection. Jensen told the AP he paid for a one-year membership in 2014 but never received any Oath Keepers' literature, attended any meetings or renewed his membership.

Jensen said he felt compelled to join because he "believed in the oath that we took to support the US Constitution and to defend it against enemies foreign and domestic." He wouldn't say whether he now disavows the Oath Keepers, saying he doesn't have enough information about the group today.

"Back in 2014, they appeared to be a pretty solid conservative group, I can't speak to them now," he said.

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| | <p>ADL said it found the names of at least 10 people who now work as police chiefs and 11 sheriffs. All of the police chiefs and sheriffs who responded to the AP said they no longer have any ties to the group.</p> <p>“I don’t even know what they’re posting. I never get any updates,” said Mike Hollinshead, sheriff of Idaho’s Elmore County. “I’m not paying dues or membership fees or anything.”</p> <p>Hollinshead, a Republican, said he was campaigning for sheriff several years ago when voters asked him if he was familiar with the Oath Keepers. Hollinshead said he wanted to learn about the group and recalls paying for access to content on the Oath Keepers’ website, but that was the extent of his involvement.</p> <p>Benjamin Boeke, police chief in Oskaloosa, Iowa, recalled getting emails from the group years ago and said he believes a friend may have signed him up. But he said he never paid to become a member and doesn’t know anything about the group.</p> <p>Eric Williams, police chief in Idalou, Texas, also said in an email that he hasn’t been a member or had any interaction with the Oath Keepers in over 10 years. He called the storming of the Capitol “terrible in every way.”</p> <p>“I pray this country finds its way back to civility and peace in discourse with one another,” he said.</p> |
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Suspicious, Unusual

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Historic West heatwave crushing records |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/09/06/western-heatwave-california-records-climate/ |
| GIST | <p>A historically severe September heat wave is baking the West, breaking hundreds of records, posing a danger to public health and pushing California’s power grid to the limit. Some records have been shattered by wide margins as the scorching air mass exacerbates the fire danger in the drought-stricken region.</p> <p>After San Jose and Sacramento soared to all-time records of 109 and 116 degrees Tuesday afternoon, California’s Independent System Operator (ISO) said the state’s electricity supplies were running low. It warned consumers on Tuesday evening that “rotating power outages are now possible” and raised its Energy Emergency Alert to Level 3.</p> <p>Nearly three hours after the alert was issued, California ISO said it was ending the alert after stability had been maintained, in large part due to consumers conserving power. The operator said it had not needed to cut power to any customers during the alert.</p> <p>The power grid hit a peak demand of 52,061 megawatts Tuesday evening, “a new all-time record,” California ISO said, surpassing its previous record of 50,270 megawatts on July 24, 2004.</p> <p>The ISO urged residents to “precool” their homes to 72 degrees Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, and then turn the thermostat to 78 degrees during peak demand hours between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. It has called for such reductions on seven straight days.</p> <p>The heat taxing the state’s power grid is historic for both its duration and intensity, evidenced by the continued toppling of long-standing monthly and all-time records.</p> <p>“This will be essentially the worst September heat wave on record, certainly in Northern California and arguably for the state overall,” said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA, in a Twitter Spaces discussion Tuesday. “By some metrics, it might be one of the worst heat waves on record, period, in any</p> |

month, given its duration and its extreme magnitude, especially in Northern California and especially in the Sacramento region.”

Forty-two million Americans are under excessive heat warnings, including across most of California, northeast Arizona and adjacent southern Nevada. The Great Basin, southern Idaho and western Utah are under heat advisories.

“Extreme heat will significantly increase the potential for heat-related illnesses, particularly for those working or participating in outdoor activities,” wrote the National Weather Service. “[There is a] very high risk of heat stress or illness for the entire population.”

The excessive heat is also fueling the risk of fast-moving fires.

Red-flag warnings — connoting dangerous fire weather — encapsulate the entirety of Montana in addition to northern Idaho, much of Oregon, and northern and eastern Washington.

A number of large wildfires have erupted over the past week in California, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. The fast-moving Mill Fire, which erupted Friday in Northern California, [killed two people](#) and injured three. On Monday, two people died and another was injured by the Fairview Fire, which started near the city of Hemet, which is about 75 miles southeast of Los Angeles in Riverside County.

In Southern California’s San Bernardino County, Big Bear Mountain ski resort [was using water from snowmakers](#) to hold back the Radford Fire, which had grown to 450 acres.

The [National Interagency Fire Center elevated](#) the need for national fire preparedness to [Level 4 out of 5](#) because of hot, dry and windy conditions [predicted for the foreseeable future](#).

Extreme heat to persist for several days

The heat, which reached a blistering crescendo Tuesday, will remain at extreme levels through Thursday as a stagnant high pressure “heat dome” crests overhead.

“[D]angerous heat will [likely](#) persist through the end of the week,” [wrote](#) the Weather Service office in Sacramento on Tuesday.

The heat traces the spine of California down to the Bay Area and Southern California too.

Los Angeles will spend the next few days in the mid- to upper 80s, but the temperature should peak around 90 degrees on Friday. Keep in mind that estimate is at the airport, though — just a few miles inland, highs will hover around 100 to 105 degrees.

Death Valley, Calif., has hit at least 124 degrees four times in the past six days and is expected to top 120 degrees through Thursday.

The heat has been spilling east too, bringing toasty weather to Denver, [with record highs in the upper 90s to near 100](#) projected through Thursday. Salt Lake City — which soared Tuesday afternoon to a September record of 105 degrees — will continue to hover in the low 100s.

When will the heat ease?

The heat will begin to gradually ease after Thursday. Temperatures closer to average will return to much of California over the weekend, although temperatures will remain somewhat above normal over the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies.

Around that time, moisture from [Hurricane Kay in the Pacific](#) southwest of the Baja Peninsula could begin wafting northward, lowering temperatures and possibly bringing some beneficial rainfall to Southern California and even farther north. However, its specific effects on the region are highly uncertain and it could also increase the [potential for dry lightning](#) that could increase the fire risk.

Climate change connection

While extreme heat events are not caused by climate change, human influence on our atmosphere is making them more frequent, intense, prolonged and, in some cases, larger. It propels already high-end events into record territory.

Breaking records by large margins, the heat wave bears shades of the unprecedented events that torched the [Pacific Northwest in June of 2021](#) and [Britain in July](#), both of which scientists concluded would have been virtually impossible without human-caused climate change.

Stateside, over the past week, more than 1,141 warm-weather records have been set in the United States [compared with just 36 cold records](#). If climate change wasn't a factor, these extremes would roughly balance out.

Rundown of key records

From California to Montana, hundreds of heat records have been set since Aug. 30, and [dozens more are in jeopardy](#) over the coming days.

In addition to calendar-day records, multiple locations have set monthly records and even all-time records (the warmest temperature observed in any month). We highlight some of the of most significant here:

- Downtown Sacramento set an all-time high of 116 degrees on Tuesday, surpassing the previous mark of 114 from July 17, 1925. Records there date back to 1877. Stockton tied its all-time high of 115.
- San Jose, Calif. set a record of 109 degrees Tuesday. King City (116), Santa Rosa (115), Napa (114) and Redwood City (110, tie) also set all-time highs, according to the Weather Service office serving the Bay Area.
- Ukiah, Calif., about 100 miles north of San Francisco, tied an all-time high of 117 degrees Tuesday.
- Salt Lake City has broken its previous September record high four times in six days. It hit [105 on Tuesday](#), [104 on Monday](#), 103 Saturday and 102 Thursday. The previous monthly record was 100. It has hit at least 100 six times this month. Before 2022, it [had only done so three times](#) during September dating to 1928.
- Bakersfield, Calif., hit 115 Tuesday, tying its September record high. Other September highs set Tuesday include Vacaville (115, tying Monday), Marysville (115), Hanford (114), Fresno (114) and Modesto (111).
- Death Valley hit 125 degrees Tuesday, tying its September record high and missing the September world record by just 1 degree. On Saturday, the low temperature in Death Valley of 102 degrees tied the highest minimum temperature ever recorded worldwide during September. It has topped 120 degrees on eight straight days, setting calendar day records of 123 on Wednesday, 124 on Thursday, 124 on Friday, 122 on Saturday, 124 on Sunday and 125 on Tuesday. It has established [a new September record](#) for most days reaching at least 120.
- Reno, Nev., set a September record high of 106 on Tuesday, beating the previous record of 104 set Sunday, after tying the previous monthly mark of 102 on Friday.
- Grand Junction, Colo., set [a September record high of 101 Tuesday](#).
- Fairfield, Calif., about 40 miles northeast of San Francisco, set an all-time high of 117 degrees Monday — three degrees above the previous record. Livermore [set an all-time high of 116](#) on Monday which it matched on Tuesday.
- San Diego tied its all-time warmest low temperature on record Sunday, falling to just 78 degrees.
- Burbank, Calif., matched its all-time warmest low temperature on Sunday, only dropping to 82 degrees. On Wednesday, it [set an August record high temperature of 112](#).
- Las Vegas set a September record high minimum temperature of 87 on Sunday.
- Casper, Wyo., set a September record high of 100 Sunday.
- On Saturday, many locations in the Mountain West set September record highs, including Great Falls (102), Bozeman (100) and Butte (96) in Montana and Pocatello (102) and Idaho Falls (99) in Idaho.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The heat even surged into western Canada on Friday, where the village of Lytton set a September record for British Columbia of 103.3 degrees (39.6 Celsius). • Redmond, Ore., set a September record high of 106 on Friday. |
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Crime, Criminals

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 King Co. refuses jail suspects: cites Covid |
| SOURCE | https://mynorthwest.com/3618007/rantz-king-county-refuses-to-jail-dangerous-suspects-still-blames-covid/ |
| GIST | <p>The King County jail is still turning down almost all misdemeanor bookings, citing King County Executive Dow Constantine's COVID-19 restrictions. Every non-violent misdemeanor suspect — the type of quality of life crimes plaguing Seattle — gets a pass from jail time.</p> <p>Suspects arrested for car theft or burglary are let go. If a prolific offender keeps stealing alcohol from the same store, he will not face a booking. Smoking fentanyl on a bus? The suspect may be temporarily removed from the metro, but can continue to consume elsewhere.</p> <p>What's worse, many suspects know an easy way out of jail even if they committed a bookable felony. They just say they swallowed drugs or are injured.</p> <p>The booking policy is not based on science. It's due to Constantine's abolitionist ideology purposefully keeping criminals out of jail, and his office doesn't plan on changing it any time soon.</p> <p>Get out of Seattle jail free card</p> <p>Several frustrated law enforcement officers contacted the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH to sound the alarms. They are not allowed to book suspects, including prolific offenders, who they know are taking over the county.</p> <p>"Any misdemeanor theft will not be booked at King County Jail," one King County Sheriff's deputy tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. "They won't accept it unless it's felony level (more than \$750). So we can't book any shoplifters when we catch them and we have to just let them go."</p> <p>Of course, that means the shoplifter, who is almost always homeless, will continue to victimize businesses downtown.</p> <p>Thanks to the omnipresent shoplifting threat, businesses have struggled to recuperate after the COVID economic shutdown. Some businesses closed up for good, citing the rise in crime. The businesses that stay open are forced to hire security to keep shoplifters at bay. But when you know you won't get booked, security makes little difference.</p> <p>Criminals are adapting</p> <p>When King County stopped prosecuting for personal possession in 2018, drug dealers adapted by carrying fewer products and replenishing their supply more often. Similarly, criminals know how much to steal without the threat of jail.</p> <p>"Not being able to book misdemeanors is probably one of the biggest things impacting crime right now," one Seattle police officer tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. "Criminals know we can't book them for thefts as long as they don't take a felony amount of product. A few years ago, people were afraid of going to jail (even if just for the day), and they were much less likely to do it. Now they know there is no threat of having to go to jail, so why not do it?"</p> <p>The officer notes that many of the shoplifting cases are part of organized crime. But it's also a crime that fuels addiction. It's wrong to assume suspects will stick with misdemeanor crimes after release. Indeed, Seattle is plagued by prolific offenders with crimes that escalate.</p> |

“People tend to think low-level crime has no real impact on violent crime, but when most of the burglaries and thefts occur to fund drug addiction, that leads to more and more narcotic sales, which eventually leads to gang violence over contested territory,” the officer notes, citing the notoriously deadly 3rd & Pine in downtown Seattle.

Even felonies can get a pass

A spokesperson for the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD), which operates the jail, is sure to note that felonies and violent misdemeanors are still bookable, but that’s not the whole story.

When a suspect is arrested, all they have to do is cite a reason to go to the hospital, like an admission that they swallowed drugs or that they can’t breathe. King County jail will not accept them. Officers must then take them to Harborview where they are almost certain to be released.

“If you say you swallowed drugs, it’s a mandatory medical decline, and we have to take them to the hospital,” the deputy explains. “So that’s a mandatory six-hour stay at the hospital for observation, which takes the officer off the road for that amount of time. Many times it’s not worth the time due to staffing, so they just get let go.”

The Seattle officer concurs, saying this is a real problem because it means some felony suspects will be let go. He says the suspect is “told to turn themselves into the jail when released, but they never do.”

The problem is made worse by the low staffing for the SPD. Even if an officer wanted to stay with the suspects, thinking the community is best served by jailing them, they might have no choice but to leave after being authorized by a supervisor.

“Felonies will depend on [the] severity of the crime in most circumstances, but it’s not uncommon to leave felony property crime suspects at Harborview Medical Center if they are declined at jail.”

Blaming COVID

Under Constantine’s leadership, the county’s jail system pretends nothing has changed since the start of the pandemic.

“The Executive Order regarding jail bookings during the COVID-19 pandemic has remained in effect since March of 2020 and continues at present,” DAJD spokesperson Noah Haglund tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH.

At the end of August, Haglund said 21 criminal suspects were COVID-positive.

“COVID-19 continues to pose a risk for staff and people in custody at King County jails,” Haglund claimed.

“Congregate settings like jails remain at higher risk as they are confined spaces with lots of people and limited air circulation, and those who are there do not have an option to reduce their exposure risk by going somewhere else. Additionally, we still have significant levels of infection in the community,” he added.

But COVID doesn’t pose any more risk than the flu or a stomach virus for most people. It’s why there are no county restrictions on congregate settings outside of jail. It’s certainly true that inmates have no option to reduce their exposure by going somewhere else, once they’re booked. They did, of course, have an option to choose not to break the law, knowing it could land them in jail.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Judge unseats NM official in Capitol riot |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/06/us/politics/jan-6-griffin-insurrection.html |

WASHINGTON — A judge in New Mexico on Tuesday ordered a county commissioner convicted of participating in the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol removed from office under the 14th Amendment, making him the first public official in more than a century to be barred from serving under a constitutional ban on insurrectionists holding office.

The ruling declared the Capitol assault an insurrection and unseated Couy Griffin, a commissioner in New Mexico's Otero County and the founder of Cowboys for Trump, who was convicted earlier this year of trespassing when he breached barricades outside the Capitol during the attack. The judge's order grabbed the attention of advocates across the country who have been pushing to use the 14th Amendment to disqualify former President Donald J. Trump and elected officials who worked with him in seeking to overturn the 2020 election from holding office in the future.

In his decision, Judge Francis J. Mathew of the New Mexico District Court said the insurrection on Jan. 6 included not only the mob violence that unfolded that day, but also the "surrounding planning, mobilization and incitement" that led to it.

"Mr. Griffin is constitutionally disqualified from serving," the judge wrote.

Liberal groups have filed legal challenges in Arizona, New Mexico, North Carolina and Wisconsin seeking to block lawmakers accused of supporting the Jan. 6 rioters — including some prominent Republican members of Congress — from holding office under the Constitution. Until Tuesday, none had succeeded.

"This just went from being theoretical to being something that is legally recognized and legally possible," said Noah Bookbinder, director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a nonpartisan watchdog organization that filed suit against Mr. Griffin on behalf of a group of New Mexico residents. "That's hugely significant. It could have real implications for protecting the country from people associated with the effort to overturn the last election."

Section 3 of the 14th Amendment, adopted during Reconstruction to punish members of the Confederacy for taking up arms against their country in the Civil War, declares that "no person shall" hold "any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any state, who, having previously taken an oath" to "support the Constitution," had then "engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof."

Reconstruction-era federal prosecutors brought civil actions in court to oust officials linked to the Confederacy, and Congress in some cases refused to seat members, [according to the Congressional Research Service](#).

But the last time the section of the amendment was enforced was in 1919, when Congress refused to seat a socialist member who was accused of giving aid and comfort to Germany during World War I.

An [appeals court ruled in May](#) that participants in an insurrection against the U.S. government could be barred from holding office, but the target of that case, Representative Madison Cawthorn, Republican of North Carolina, had already lost his primary, rendering the matter essentially moot.

In a [challenge to the candidacy of Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene](#), Republican of Georgia, a judge also said the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol qualified as an insurrection but said that there was insufficient evidence to prove that Ms. Greene engaged in it.

In some ways, Mr. Griffin's case was a cleaner win for advocates seeking to punish officials connected to the riot because he was part of the mob that stormed the Capitol, not a lawmaker sitting inside.

On Jan. 6, Mr. Griffin and a videographer clambered over barricades at the Capitol and made their way onto the inauguration stage in front of the building. There, Mr. Griffin spent more than an hour

addressing the mob, at times speaking through a bullhorn. He later said that he had been attempting to lead them in prayer.

In March, Judge Trevor N. McFadden, presiding at a bench trial in Federal District Court in Washington, found Mr. Griffin guilty of one misdemeanor count of illegally entering a restricted area at the Capitol and acquitted him of another that accused him of disorderly conduct. Mr. Griffin was sentenced in June to 14 days in prison.

Mr. Griffin's attempts to challenge Mr. Trump's defeat in the 2020 election — including issuing calls for violence on behalf of the former president — preceded the events of Jan. 6, according to the ruling by the judge in New Mexico.

As early as November 2020, the ruling said, Mr. Griffin attended Stop the Steal rallies in his home state, some of them with a militia group known as the New Mexico Civil Guard. He also took part in a multicity bus tour arranged by the pro-Trump group Women for America First designed to recruit protesters to go to Washington for Mr. Trump's speech on Jan. 6, in which the president called on his supporters to "fight like hell" against his election loss and urged them to march to the Capitol while Congress was meeting to confirm it.

At a stop in The Woodlands, Texas, on Jan. 1, 2021, the ruling said, Mr. Griffin urged a crowd to view the attempts to overturn the election as a last-ditch fight, comparing it to the famous standoff at the Alamo.

"This is a battle and a war we cannot lose," Mr. Griffin said.

Two days later, in Bowling Green, Ky., Mr. Griffin told a crowd that a war was underway with "the elitist, gross, wicked, vile people," adding, "We got to get our country back."

In Atlanta, on Jan. 4, the ruling said, Mr. Griffin anticipated that there could be violence when crowds of people descended on Washington for Mr. Trump's speech. Speaking to another crowd, he called on "men from across our nation to come to Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6, because it might be a battle."

Mr. Griffin represented himself in the 14th Amendment case. Nicholas Smith, a lawyer who represented him during his criminal trial, declined to comment.

Even after his criminal conviction, Mr. Griffin, a bombastic man who briefly considered riding a horse to his sentencing at the courthouse in Washington, continued to publicly disparage the case and insult the judge who heard it.

He took to Twitter, court papers said, and complained that Judge McFadden had issued a "PRE written" guilty verdict, decrying it as "pathetic" and adding, "I wonder who wrote it?"

After he was sentenced, Mr. Griffin urged reporters to examine a series of debunked conspiracy theories about Jan. 6, including one about [an Arizona man who was falsely pegged as an undercover F.B.I. agent who had instigated the mob that day](#). Around that time, Mr. Griffin also took part in an attempt by the Otero County commission to reject certification of a recent local election until voting machines in the county were inspected.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Texas police revise mass shooting training |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/06/us/texas-mass-shootings.html |
| GIST | HOUSTON — In the wake of a massacre at an elementary school in the city of Uvalde, the Texas Department of Public Safety has quietly adopted a much more aggressive approach to handling school shootings, according to a July email obtained by The New York Times. |

The department has also referred five of its officers to the state inspector general for a formal investigation following an internal inquiry into the actions and inaction by state police officers at Robb Elementary School during the shooting on May 24, according to a spokesman. The officers face possible suspension, demotion or firing.

Two of the officers had already been suspended, said the spokesman, Travis Considine.

Taken together, the moves amount to an acknowledgment that while the director of the state police, Steven McCraw, has publicly laid blame for the failed police response on the former Uvalde schools police chief, Pete Arredondo, other officers at the scene have also been found to share responsibility.

The change in protocol, adopted without fanfare less than two months after the shooting, means that Department of Public Safety officers responding to an active shooting in a school would be operating under guidelines much different from those followed in Uvalde, where scores of officers did not rush to attack the gunman but instead considered him to be barricaded and contained, a situation that allowed for a more prolonged response.

Minutes after the shooting began inside Robb Elementary school, officers began arriving. But they did not enter the classrooms to confront the gunman until more than an hour later, a delay in treating the wounded children and teachers that has led to overlapping state and federal investigations.

Ultimately, Border Patrol agents stormed the classrooms and killed the gunman.

After initially rushing toward the shooting, Mr. Arredondo, who was fired last week, began treating the gunman, who had temporarily stopped firing inside a pair of connected classrooms, as a barricaded subject. Under that kind of response protocol, officers could theoretically focus on negotiating a surrender or strategizing an entry.

Mr. McCraw has called that the “wrong decision.” In his email, he described how state troopers would now be expected to respond.

“D.P.S. officers responding to an active shooter at a school will be authorized to overcome any delay to neutralizing an attacker,” Mr. McCraw wrote in the July email that laid out the new policy. “When a subject fires a weapon at a school he remains an active shooter until he is neutralized and is not to be treated as a ‘barricaded subject.’”

Mr. McCraw said that the new guidance diverged from the training that had previously been offered by the department, and also from the approach recommended by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center at Texas State University, which had been used by the Texas state police and other departments around the country.

He said the training would now change.

“We will provide proper training and guidelines for recognizing and overcoming poor command decisions at an active shooter scene,” Mr. McCraw wrote.

The changes came over the summer but were not publicly announced.

While Mr. McCraw initially focused his criticism on Mr. Arredondo, an investigatory committee of the Texas House blamed a lack of clear leadership and systemic failures among the many law enforcement officers who arrived at the school from agencies including the local police, federal agents from the Border Patrol, the state police and sheriff’s offices.

The executive director of the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center, J. Pete Blair, said he had not been told of Mr. McCraw’s email or the change in policy. While unfamiliar with its details,

he said that the training center's approach to active shooters was not at issue in the failure in Uvalde and that the center already emphasized confronting any active gunman immediately.

"We teach stop the killing, stop the dying," Mr. Blair said. "If the attacker is preventing you from reaching people who are injured, that attacker is still active" and should not be treated as a barricaded subject or hostage taker. (Mr. McCraw said the department would "continue to embrace the ALERRT doctrine" in other respects.)

In the months since the massacre, the response by other officers at the scene besides Mr. Arredondo has come under harsh scrutiny, including that of many from the Department of Public Safety who arrived early and also did not seek to quickly confront the gunman.

As part of its investigation of the Uvalde shooting, the department conducted an internal inquiry into how its officers had responded. One sergeant from the state police arrived at the school minutes after the gunman but did not rush to the classrooms. Others came later, according to body camera video from the scene released by the city of Uvalde. In total, the department had about 90 officers at the school on the day of the shooting.

The department referred five of its officers to the department's office of inspector general either because of the actions that they took at the school or because of their failure to act during the shooting, Mr. Considine said. "Thus far, two of the five officers have been suspended with pay pending the outcome of the O.I.G. investigation," he said.

It was not immediately clear what conduct had led to their suspension. The department did not release their names.

Brian Higgins, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and a former police chief in Bergen County, New Jersey, said that there were many things about the police response in Uvalde that demonstrated a need for change. The policy revision announced by Mr. McCraw, he said, appeared to differ from those of other departments by stressing the need to continue to go after a gunman in a school until the person is "neutralized."

"It's almost as if they're admitting that they were not doing things right while also giving themselves cover: 'Oh, we were just following the tactics back then,'" Mr. Higgins said. "I really think they seem to be hung up on terms. At the end of the day, the police, their responsibility is to save lives."

Word of the suspensions and policy changes came on Tuesday, the first day of school in Uvalde, a delayed opening that had been met with apprehension and anger among many parents in the small city west of San Antonio.

No students returned to Robb Elementary, where an 18-year-old gunman armed with an AR-15-style rifle killed 19 students and two teachers just two days before the end of the last school year. The students have been transferred to other schools, and the district planned to demolish the elementary school.

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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Canada stabbing suspect remains at large |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/06/world/canada/canada-stabbing-suspect-manhunt.html |
| GIST | <p>JAMES SMITH CREE NATION, Saskatchewan — Two and a half days after a bloody campaign of stabbings in Canada left 10 people dead and the police conducting a manhunt that covered hundreds of miles, the case briefly appeared to have returned on Tuesday afternoon to the Indigenous reserve where it all started.</p> <p>Police cruisers and unmarked trucks raced to the James Smith Cree Nation reserve in the western province of Saskatchewan, and residents were once again warned to take shelter. But hours later, the authorities released a discomfiting statement to a province on edge:</p> |

Myles Sanderson was still at large.

Mr. Sanderson, 30, is one of two brothers accused of carrying out the spree of violence that began on the reserve in the predawn hours of Sunday. Investigators found the body of his brother, Damien, 31, near a house on the reserve the next day, and said they were looking into whether Myles Sanderson had killed him.

In the aftermath of the attacks, which wounded an additional 18 people, the authorities began a search for the suspects that covered not just Saskatchewan but also its neighboring provinces. Many residents said they were shaken by the attacks, and some began taking security measures rarely seen in the generally placid communities.

Then, on Tuesday, tensions ratcheted up again when the police received a report that Mr. Sanderson may have been spotted back at the reserve.

In an emergency alert, the authorities asked people to shelter in place as a large number of officers sped toward the north side of the reserve, which covers about 27 square miles, converging around the Saskatchewan River. The buzzing sound of ATVs could be heard from the river valley.

At the home of one resident, Ivor Wayne Burns, young men stood guard outside, armed with .22-caliber rifles. Mr. Burns's sister, Gloria Lydia Burns, 61, was among the people killed in the rampage.

Then came the all-clear from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"After further investigation into the reports of possible sightings of Myles Sanderson on the James Smith Cree Nation," they said in a statement at 3 p.m., "the Saskatchewan R.C.M.P. has determined that he is not located in the community. The R.C.M.P. continues to search for Myles Sanderson. As his whereabouts remain unknown, the emergency alert is active for the entire province and we continue to urge the public to take appropriate precautions."

The police believe Mr. Sanderson may be injured.

With the motive for the attacks still unclear, or at least undisclosed, attention was fixed Tuesday on the surviving Sanderson brother — and more precisely on how he had managed to make his way back onto the street despite a long history of crime, much of it violent. In May, his image could be seen on a Crime Stoppers wanted poster.

It was just months earlier that Mr. Sanderson had been granted his freedom.

With 59 convictions for crimes that included aggravated assault, drunken driving and failing 28 times to comply with his bail conditions, he went before a Canadian parole board requesting to be released early from prison. At the time, he was serving a sentence of more than four years for assault with a weapon, assaulting an officer and robbery, among other crimes.

His parole officer argued against early release, pointing to Mr. Sanderson's history of "deceit." But in February, the parole board decided to release him, saying he "appeared to have been making good progress on reintegration," citing his sobriety and efforts at anger management.

The details of his criminal record are outlined in a parole report.

In July 2017, Mr. Sanderson was accused of entering an ex-girlfriend's home while she had friends over and threatening her, mentioning a gang, before throwing a cement block into a side window of her friend's car.

Just days later, he threatened to murder an employee at a store on the reserve and burn down his home, the report says.

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| | <p>And in November of that year, Mr. Sanderson had threatened an unnamed accomplice with a gun, ordering him to rob a fast-food restaurant and fleeing with \$150.</p> <p>The next spring, Mr. Sanderson stabbed two men with a fork — he had been drinking with them — and then beat one of them until he was unconscious, according to the report. After the police tracked him down two months after that episode, he kicked an officer in the face and the head while being loaded into the back of a cruiser, the authorities say.</p> <p>Records cited in the parole report say that Mr. Sanderson grew up witnessing domestic violence and that he began drinking and smoking marijuana when he was 12, and using cocaine at 14.</p> <p>But at the parole hearing in February, he said he had stayed sober, gotten a job and sought out a therapist to work through his issues, according to the parole report. He said he wanted to break the cycle of violence that had plagued generations of his family.</p> <p>Late on Tuesday, the Parole Board of Canada and the Correctional Service of Canada indicated they would conduct a joint investigation into Mr. Sanderson's release.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Bellevue PD arrest 50: theft from same store |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news/local/bellevue-police-have-arrested-more-than-50-for-theft-other-crimes-at-home-depot-this-year |
| GIST | <p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — More than 50 people have been arrested in Bellevue since January, all stealing from the same store.</p> <p>The Bellevue Police Department (BPD) partnered with Home Depot to cut down on shoplifting and crime in and around the business since the start of the year.</p> <p>Since, BPD said it has arrested the suspects at the location for shoplifting, robbery, possession of a stolen vehicle and more.</p> <p>Recently, a patrol stopped two suspects from trafficking stolen items after a loss prevention officer told BPD a vehicle showed up at the store. The vehicle had been known to use in a recent theft of a pressure washer at a Home Depot in Bothell.</p> <p>Detectives watched as one suspect sold the pressure washer to someone else in the parking lot. Photos of the Bothell theft showed the suspects wearing the same clothing as they were the day they stole the item. Both were arrested and booked into jail.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 Feds rule 2021 Tacoma house fire arson |
| SOURCE | https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article265388376.html |
| GIST | <p>A fire that burned a three-story house in Tacoma's North End last year, killing an 83-year-old man, has been ruled an arson by federal investigators, the Tacoma Police Department said Tuesday.</p> <p>The Dec. 31 fire in the 200 block of Rosemount Way initially was determined by Tacoma Fire Department to be caused by an electrical wire malfunction. James Elliott died in the blaze, and the Pierce County Medical Examiner found he died of asphyxiation due to smoke inhalation.</p> <p>Continued investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives found the cause of the house fire was not due to a malfunction.</p> <p>In February, KING 5 reported that a checkbook belonging to Elliott turned up in a truck that belonged to Sarah Ramey, a 42-year-old woman who was arrested on suspicion of setting more than a dozen fires in</p> |

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| | <p>Tacoma's central and northern neighborhoods at the end of January. The victim's son, Dan Elliott, told the TV station that a bank notified him that Ramey was using his father's checkbook.</p> <p>More than a dozen suspicious fires cropped up in January, with as many as 11 reported in one night in Tacoma and Ruston. The fires set residents on edge until Ramey's arrest. She was later charged with seven counts of first-degree arson, first-degree attempted arson and second-degree identity theft among other charges.</p> <p>The killing brings Tacoma's 2021 homicide count to 34. Tacoma has matched that number of homicides this year after a violent Labor Day weekend that included two fatal shootings.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 09/06 DC-area county enforces teen curfew |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/teen-curfew-enforced-dc-area-county-response-troubling/story?id=89405541 |
| GIST | <p>Officials in one Maryland county said they are going to temporarily enforce a state curfew for teens amid a "troubling" increase in juvenile arrests.</p> <p>Prince George's County police officers have arrested an "eye-popping" 430 juveniles so far this year -- more than double the number from this time last year, county executive Angela Alsobrooks told reporters during a press briefing Monday.</p> <p>Carjacking is one area of particular concern, officials said. Eighty-four juveniles have been arrested for carjackings this year, half of whom were under the age of 15, she said. Among the 84 arrested, 34 had prior arrests for a violent crime or gun offense, she said.</p> <p>"At this point, these kids don't just need a hug, they also need to be held accountable," Alsobrooks said. "I know this isn't the popular thing to say, but the truth of the matter is, it's a fair question: Where are their parents? Where are the aunts? Where are the uncles and other family members who are responsible for them?"</p> <p>Prince George's County Police Chief Malik Aziz called the number of juvenile arrests "shocking" and a "significant" jump from last year.</p> <p>"The vast number of juveniles are out doing the right thing and living a meaningful and positive life in Prince George's County," he said during Monday's press briefing, calling those who are committing crimes "outliers."</p> <p>"We can't arrest our way out of this," he added.</p> <p>The curfew was last strongly enforced in 1995, though Alsobrooks said they "feel that the facts and circumstances warrant doing so again."</p> <p>The state law requires teens under 17 to be off the streets between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. Sunday through Thursday and between 11:59 p.m. and 5 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, unless accompanied by an adult or if an exception applies, Alsobrooks said.</p> <p>The county, which is located in the greater Washington, D.C., area, will begin stricter enforcement of the law starting this weekend for at least 30 days, Alsobrooks said. Parents will receive a warning for the first offense, though repeated offenses could see fines up to \$250 and children could be released to the Department of Social Services if parents fail to respond, she said.</p> <p>"Simply put, the enforcement of this law is to protect our children," Alsobrooks said. "Children 17 years old and younger are not legally responsible for themselves. Neither are police. Their parents are responsible and their families are responsible for keeping them safe. We need everyone working to protect our children."</p> |

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| | <p>Alsobrooks said she sees the curfew as one part of a "toolbox" to keep the community safe, alongside mental health services at schools and a summer youth enrichment program.</p> <p>The county executive said she is seeking an emergency meeting with the Department of Juvenile Services and will continue to work with the court system to understand "how these kids are being held accountable."</p> <p>Prince George's County State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy, who was not present at the briefing, defended her office's record on convictions at a later news conference.</p> <p>"We absolutely hold people accountable for serious crimes," Braveboy said Monday, calling the number of juveniles committing carjackings "outrageous," according to Washington, D.C., radio station WTOP.</p> <p>Officials in Philadelphia have also implemented a modified curfew for minors in recent weeks in an attempt to keep young people off the streets and safe during a high-crime season. Through Sept. 29, those between the ages of 14 and 17 are required to be home by 10 p.m. Previously, the latest some teenagers were able to be out was midnight. Those under 13 are required to be home by 9:30 p.m.</p> <p>For those found violating the curfew, Philadelphia police will attempt to reunite them with their families at home or a precinct or bring them to one of several community centers that have been established during the curfew.</p> |
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